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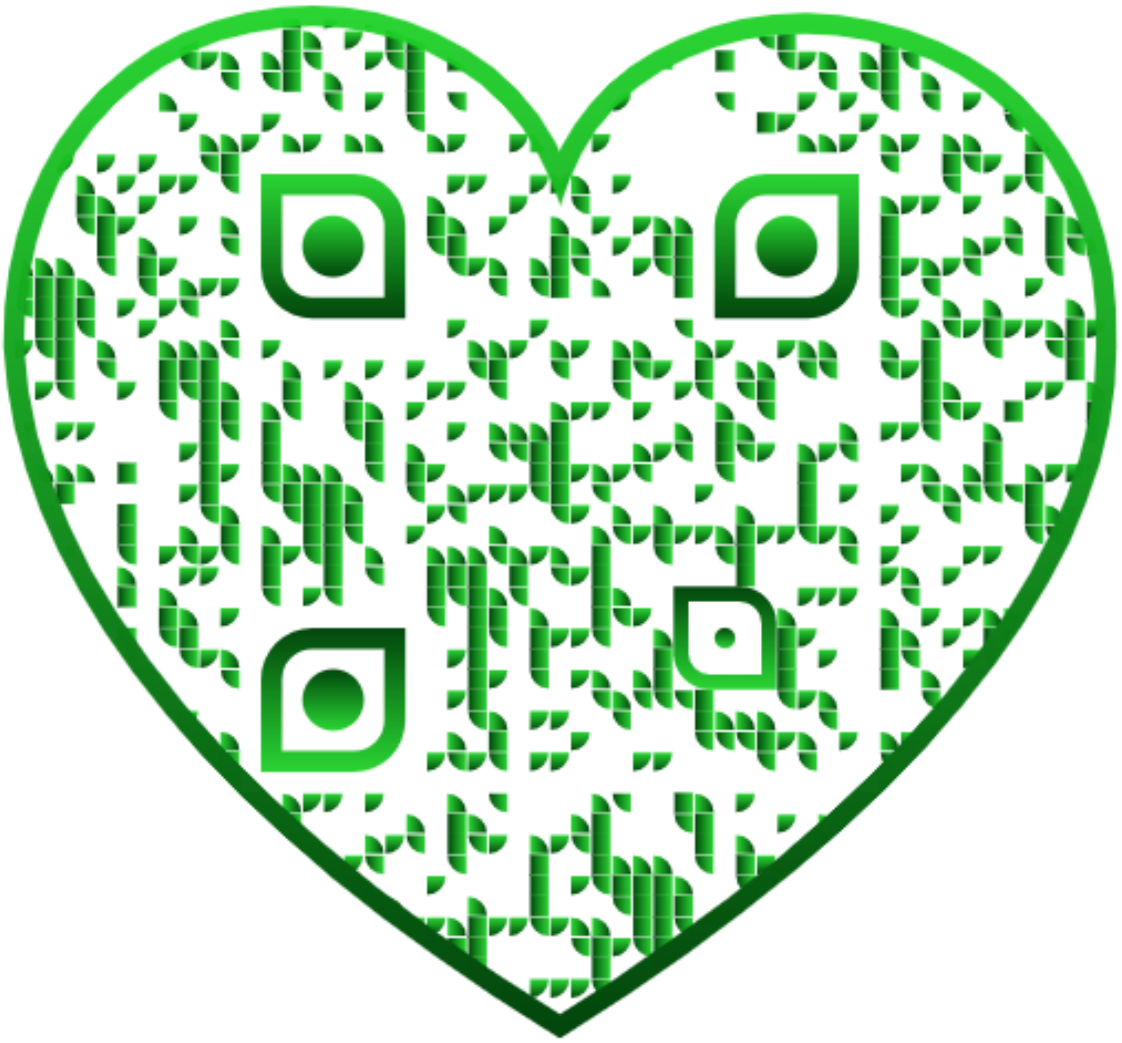

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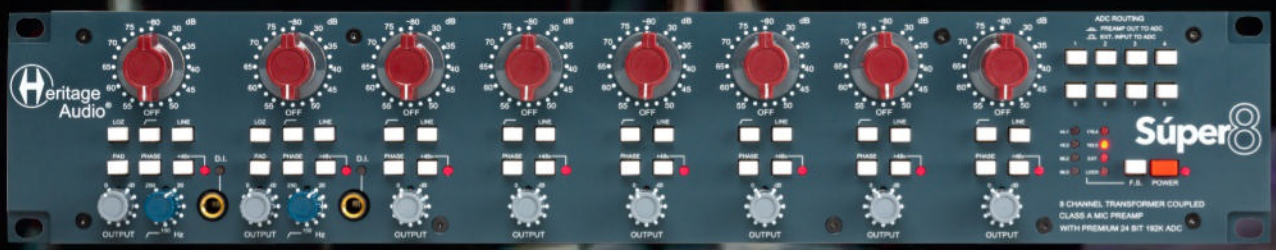


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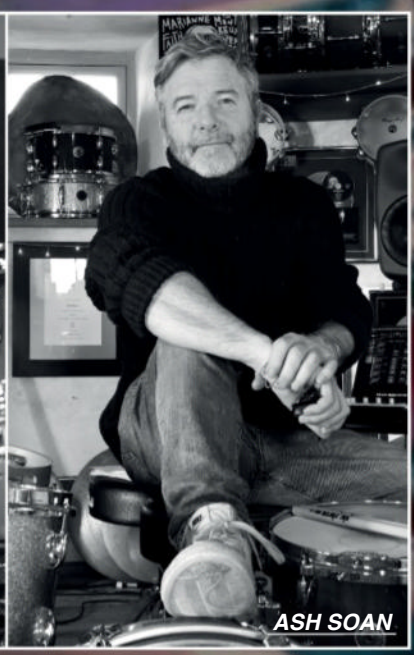
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Cover photo by Mike DeMillia
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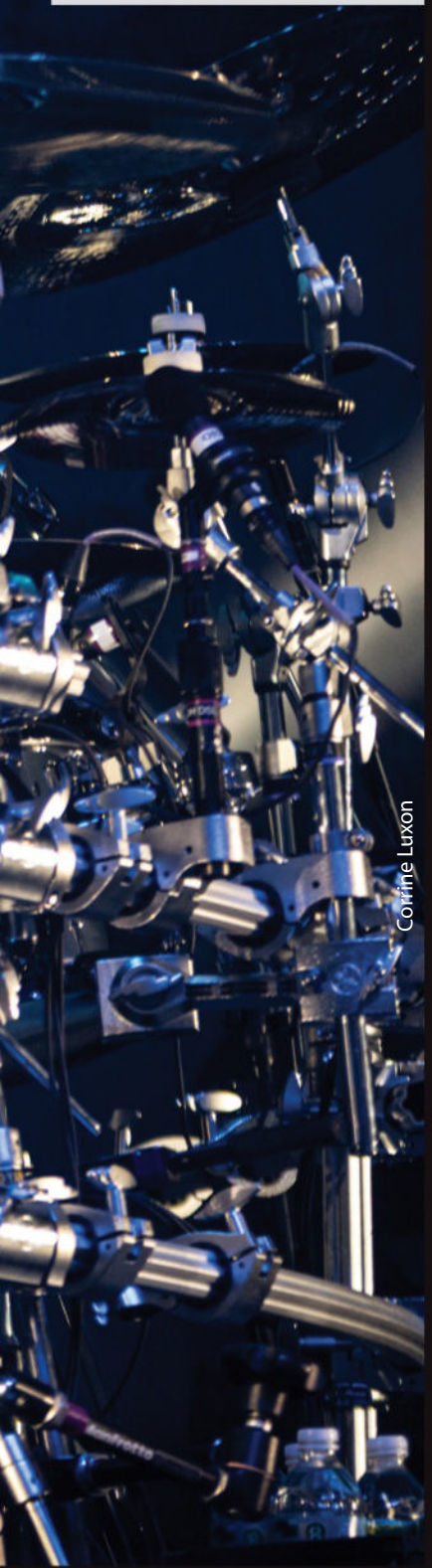

Corrine Luxon

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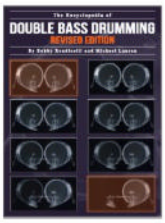


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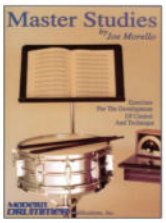

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

# Embrace Change

In proofing this month's *Modern Drummer*, I saw a theme. It was an unconscious theme, but a theme none-the-less. *Changes*. It's not just a great Yes song, a timeless David Bowie song, or a classic Buddy Miles song. Nor is it (only) the chords to a jazz standard we're learning… Change or changes are a fact!

This month, all four drummers that are interviewed Shannon Larkin, Joe Farnsworth, Louie Palmer, and Danny Schreiber all talked a great deal about change in their drumming careers and lives. Shannon Larkin's band is changing. Godsmack has recorded their last record (but they will continue touring,) Shannon is starting a new side-project, and he is thriving in his sobriety. Jazz Drummer Joe Farnsworth has recently lost several important musical mentors. Joe is embracing change in his music, his musical direction, and his drumming. Louie Palmer moved from the UK to the USA to advance his drumming career, *talk about a change*. Then he started an online drum school. Danny Schreiber of Quor talks about growing weary of the music business at one point during his career, and changing lanes to follow his path as a visual and tattoo artist. Even the interview with Laura Donelan about Music Pro insurance deals with the changes going on in our world and environment (more floods, wildfires, tornadoes, etc.) and the growing need for musicians to insure our valuable equipment. No longer do we "only" have to worry about someone breaking into our car and stealing our cymbal bag.

But changing isn't always as "easy" as just "making a change." It's a difficult process, and the bigger the change, the more difficult it is. *Identifying* change is easy, *making* a change is a challenge, *accepting* change is difficult, and *embracing* change is hard. However, *committing to*, and *living with* a change, well… That can take a lifetime. But we all must make those decisions at some point in our lives. But when you do, lean on the brotherhood of drumming to help guide you through life's adjustments. All of your drumming peers, mentors, teachers, and heroes have been there. Because being a musician has always been about accepting and making changes, big or small.

Keep learning (and changing!)

**Mark Griffith**
Editor-in-Chief, Director of Content


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CFO **Carolina Frangioni**
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Senior Art Director **Scott Bienstock**
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Associate Editor **Paolo Ragusa**
Contributing Editor & Photographer **Alex Kluft**
Digital Marketing Manager **Ricardo Rodriguez**
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***MODERN DRUMMER*** magazine (ISSN 0194-4533) is published digitally monthly and print bi-monthly by ***MODERN DRUMMER*** Publications, Inc., 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd PO Box 276064 Boca Raton, FL 33427. PERIODICALS MAIL POSTAGE paid at Boca Raton, FL 33427 and at additional mailing offices.


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**EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING/ ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES:**
MODERN DRUMMER Publications, 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd PO Box 276064 Boca Raton, FL 33427.
**Email:** info@moderndrummer.com.

MODERN DRUMMER welcomes manuscripts and photos but cannot assume responsibility for them.

**SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE:** Modern Drummer, 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd, PO Box 276064, Boca Raton, FL 33427. Change of address: Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address and send to info@moderndrummer.com

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Modern Drummer, 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd PO Box 276064 Boca Raton, FL 33427.

Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 41480017 Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: PO Box 875, Stn A, Windsor ON N9A 6P2

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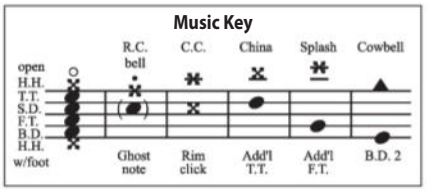

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# Patience Pays Off!

This month's *Modern Drummer* Kit of the Month comes from Diogo Veiga of Sao Paulo, Brazil. His kit is a Pearl Export kit with added 8" and 10" toms. At first, Diogo remembers that the Exports were only available with 12", 13", and 16" toms. It took six months for Diogo to finally get the additional 8 and 10 toms!

For cymbals, Diogo uses a nice mix of Zildjian, Sabian and Wuhan. Depending on the gig he might replace his K crashes with A Custom's. Diogo's snares are a Pearl Masters MCX (5.5 x 14) and a Tama 4 x 12.

We at *Modern Drummer* also like the use of the deep 13" tom as a floor tom. That's a very creative "solve," to a few different "problems." Bonito Diogo!

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# Just Duet

By Jake Reed with Peter Erskine

The greatest joy in education comes when the student teaches the teacher. Jake Reed and Ryan Shaw (who is highlighted in Jake's guest column) both studied with me at USC. They not only do me and the Thornton School of Music proud, but they are paying it forward by spreading the gospel as players, innovators, and educators. Jake is a brilliant drummer and all-around musical force who also happens to be a terrific writer. He was my first choice to pen a guest column on the Jazz Insights pages of *Modern Drummer*. I learned some new things here, and I promise that you will too.
***Peter Erskine***

**Q:** *Is there anything more fun than trading 4s with a fellow drummer?*
**A:** *Nope.*
As fun as it can be, sometimes it's easy to let a friendly conversation at the drums quickly escalate into an athletic, chop-laden shred-fest. When there's no thesis or subject established to build on, such as a form, style, or basic groove, there's no context for musical ideas to develop. Basically, all those hip licks you've been practicing have no meaning if they aren't presented within a musical framework. However, if we approach the situation from a jazz perspective, we can use a standard tune from the Great American Songbook as a vehicle for the conversation. This gives us the opportunity to create a musical moment at the drums, instead of just playing "drum-istic" ideas on the drums for drumming's sake.

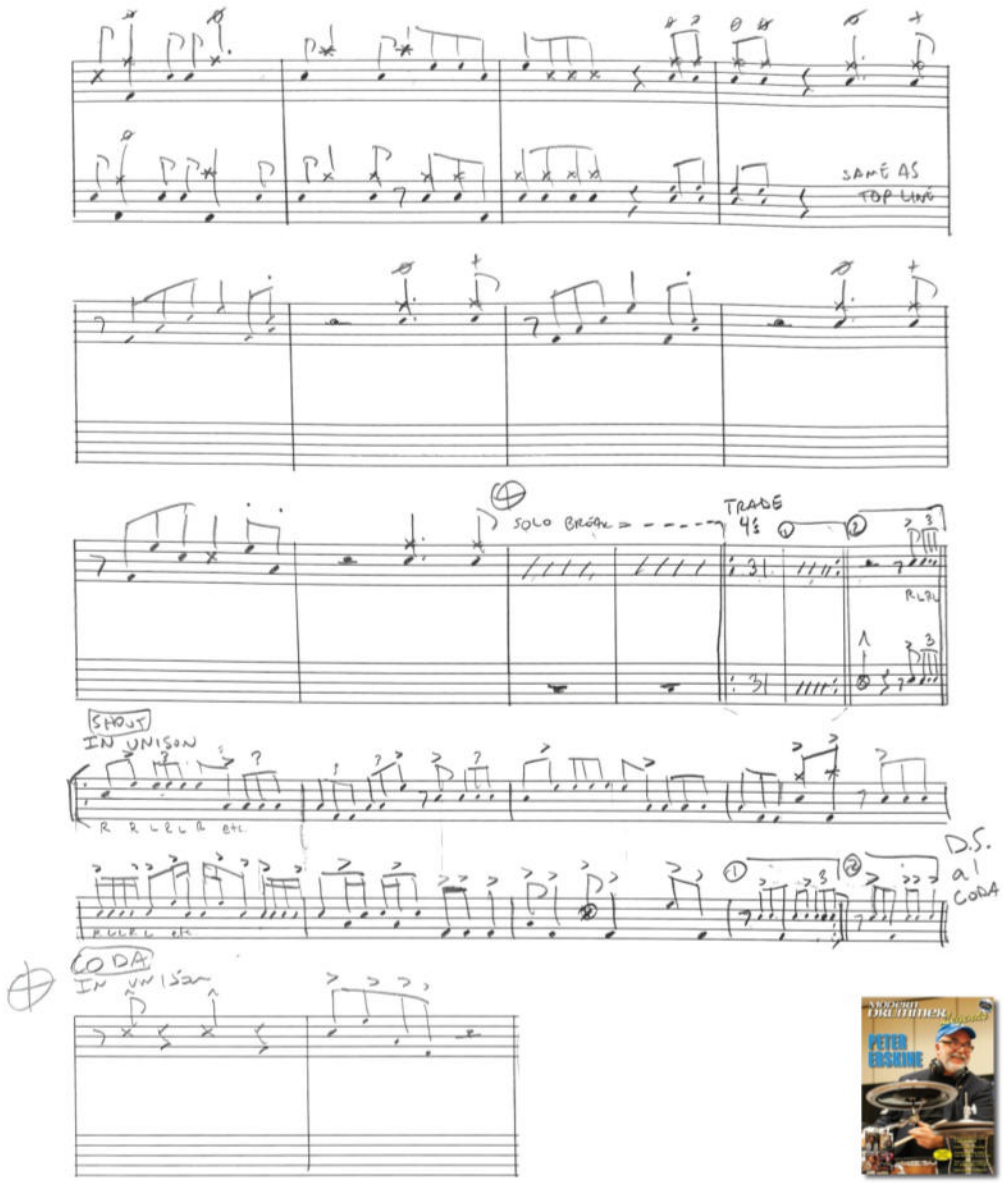
Using this approach, my drumming compadre (and fellow USC Thornton School of Music alum) Ryan Shaw and I recorded an entire album of jazz drumming duets called Drum and Drummer. "Stompin' at the

Drums" was the first duet we arranged based on the song "Stompin' at the Savoy," composed by Edgar Sampson and made famous by Benny Goodman. It's simple melody and standard AABA 32 bar form make it a great candidate for a drum duet. If you already know the tune, this will be a fun arrangement to work out with a friend. If you don't know the tune, go listen to Goodman's recording until you have the melody memorized, and then work it out with a friend!

For the A sections, we employ a little "call and response" to break up the melody between us. Then, on the second half of the B section, we play in unison to provide some textural contrast. In terms of orchestration, we're not literally trying to play the exact pitches of the tune, which would be impossible, since A) the drumset is a non-pitched instrument and B) as much as we wish it to be true, we're not Ari Hoenig! Our intent is to simply interpret the melodic contour of the song by integrating not only the basic sound of each drum and cymbal, but also through varying articulations, such as dead sticking, stick-on-stick (R/L) rimshots, short buzz strokes, and ruffs. Additionally, we can create the illusion of an ascending melody by playing "up" the drums: kick, floor tom, hi tom, snare, as well as incorporating an array of dynamics. For example, a crescendo on one drum can bend our ear into thinking the "melody" is ascending, and vice versa with a decrescendo. By combining all of these techniques, we can paint a picture of the melody using the drumset as our color palette. Pretty cool!

In terms of arrangement, using a standard such as "Stompin" allows us to quickly establish a musical context to trade ideas, i.e., there's a constant 32 bar form and we're playing with a swing time feel. Once we play the melody, we trade fours for two choruses. After trading, rather than going back to the original melody, we came up with a unison "shout" chorus for the first two A sections that admittedly gets a little "drum-y," but is presented with love in homage to some of our heroes: Max Roach, Art Blakey, and Shelly Manne. From there we D.S. to the bridge of the tune, play the last A section, and then a short Coda. Drum duets can be fun and challenging to work out but remember the goal: play music together!

See this duet performance at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhwqOohc7Nw







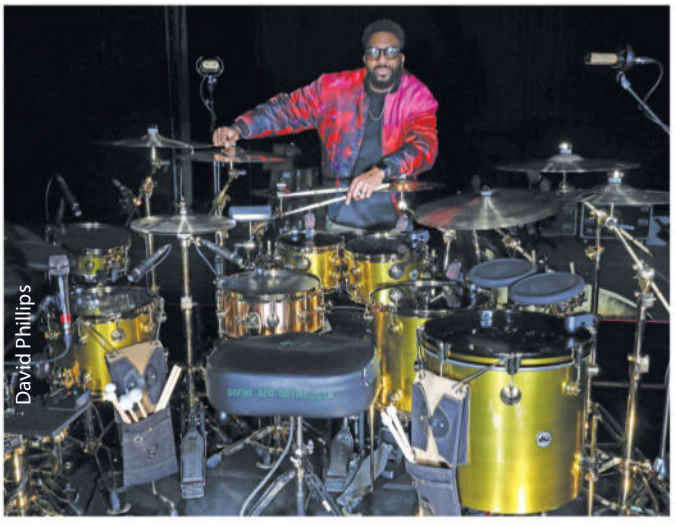
**Check out Peter's drummer profile page, and get a copy of his Legends book at moderndrummer.com**

# NEW and NOTABLE

## Pearl Welcomes Drummers to High-End Reimagined

The emerging power drummer, gigging player, or up-and-comer can expect a fresh new selection of visuals for Pearl's Decade Maple Series drums. Two new satin lacquer finish options are being introduced with the arrival of Blue Mirage, and Rose Mirage, for 2023.

Decade's cross-laminated 6-ply all Maple shell incorporates Pearl's proprietary Superior Shell Technology, resulting in a 5mm shell that projects with authority and presents with prestige. Decade Maple Series now delivers a total of eight cultured lacquer finishes options for the player to choose from. This, along with low-mass/low-contact shell hardware, optimum shell performance, and the rock-solid promise of Pearl's Lifetime Warranty make it an essential value for early-pro and gigging players. For more information on Decade Maple Drums, please visit **www.pearldrum.com.**


David Phillips

## Sam Smith, The 1975, Interpol, Black Crowes, Blur, and Placebo Drummers Use Porter & Davies

The silent tactile monitors made by Porter & Davies (P&D) are used around the globe by many top professional drummers. Joining the growing P&D family are Jonathan 'Ginger' Hamilton (Sam Smith), George Daniel (The 1975), Sam Fogarino (Interpol), Brian Griffin (Black Crowes), Dave Rowntree (Blur), Matt Lunn (Placebo) and many more.

Long-time P&D user, Ginger Hamilton, is playing with Sam Smith on one of the biggest global tours of 2023 with shows spanning Europe, USA and the Far East. He says: 'I've been using P&D for over 10 years now and it has completely elevated my gig experience. Coupled with my IEMs it adds so much more detail in the low end which is a dream for every drummer!'

For more information go to **porteranddavies.co.uk.**

## ProMark Drumsticks Releases Innovative New Nylon Brushes

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THE SOUND OF CHANGE

# 2023 Chicago Drum Show: The Drummers Family Reunion!

Story by Bob Campbell and Brian Hill

Photos by Bob Campbell

The Chicago Drum Show, now in its 32nd year, returned to the Kane County Fairgrounds on May 20 & 21, 2023. The show was a rousing success with an attendance of around 1500 visitors and over 180 booths. Attendees came from around the USA and most notably, from several different countries including Japan, the UK, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and Australia. Both attendance halls were nearly filled to capacity with vendors and two full days of presenters and clinics. There was an amazing array of vintage, new, and custom drum and percussion offerings.

**New and notable:**

• The new Kompressor series of Sonor snare drums in brass, steel, and aluminum shells, were literally a great bang for the buck – quite impressive!

• A&F Featherweight drums – incredibly light, compact, and yet huge sounding (aluminum snares and rack toms weighing 3.6 - 4.5 lbs., floor toms 7.0 - 8.5 lbs. and bass drums 10 - 14 lbs.).

• Chicago Drum single-ply snares – inspired by vintage Slingerland drum construction, now offering outstanding steambent walnut, mahogany and cherry snare drums.

• Drum engravers on the rise: gorgeous drum engraving by John Christensen (JC Designs), some of which were adorned with real diamonds! A fabulous Mike Morgan periwinkle-influenced engraving on a Dunnett/Ludwig black nickel over brass Chief snare drum attracted a lot of attention.

• Wood and Weather vintage drums had an incredibly rare Ludwig & Ludwig Abalone Pearl drum kit, circa 1935 with original bass drumhead artwork.

**Clinics**:

Following a COVID-induced hiatus, drum clinics made their welcome return to schedule at the Chicago Drum Show. Several of the clinics were geared toward drum history and were quite educational.

**Meet The Smith's** gathered of some the world's most innovative custom cymbal smith's. Nine cymbal smiths were on hand showing off their creations and doing individual presentations in the clinic hall: Francisco Domene (Domene Cymbals), Mike Mongiello (Mongiello Cymbals), Matt Nolan (Matt Nolan Custom), Ray Byrne (Byrne Cymbals), Nick Margarite (Nicky Moon Custom Cymbals), Timothy Roberts (Timothy Roberts Cymbals), Burke Daugherty (Burke's Works), Paul Francis (Cymbal Craftsman/Royal Cymbals), and Dave Collingwood (Collingwood Cymbals). Pictured in the top photo of the next page in the aforementioned order. Each of these talented craftsmen were interviewed by Steve Maxwell Jr. and they discussed their individual approaches to cymbal making: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwIxSTIHpJA.**

**Ramy Antoun**, President of A&F Drums and renowned drummer (Seal, Black Eyed Peas), began the day by telling the story of creating the Big Bertha II bass drum and wheeled platform for The University of Texas. Big Bertha II is now the largest bass drum in the world measuring 9.6 x 4.7 feet. This was an amazing feat requiring two years of metal testing to achieve the desired minimal weight and sturdiness. The aluminum shell and associated engineering has now been applied in concept to the new A&F Featherweight series of drums.

**Gary Astridge**, Ringo's Beatle drums curator and drum historian, gave a wonderful overview of Ringo's multiple Beatles-era drum kits over the years. One of the early drum sets was a 1960 Premier Mahogany Duroplastic kit. Gary noted, "Ringo used this kit when he first joined The Beatles on August 18, 1962 and played it until May 12, 1963, when he took possession of his 1963 Ludwig drum kit." Gary recently identified the Australian drummer who purchased Ringo's Premier kit while in London, England in June of that same year. Gary verified the authenticity of the kit comparing historic pictures of Ringo's kit to photos provided by the Australian owner. Indeed, another great Beatle gear mystery solved by Gary. Gary noted that Ringo's Premier kit was subsequently sold by the Australian owner and the whereabouts of the kit is currently unknown – but Gary is on the lookout! "

**Jeff Davenport**, UK drummer and returning clinic artist, gave an informative drum tuning workshop entitled, "The art of speed-tuning a drum kit." Jeff described drum tuning as a "journey of variables". The variables discussed were the type of drumhead, the drum being worked on, the room where you are listening to the drum, the intended style of music, the type

of drumstick, the height/velocity with which the drum will be hit, and the key used to tension the drumhead. In each case, Jeff provided useful examples how changes in each of these variables could affect both the tuning process and outcome.

**Eric Binder** (Eric Binder trio, author, educator) provided both a historical and applied appreciation of vintage cymbals. He played several older custom cymbals with his kit in a jazz context, most notably some K. Istanbul Zildjian's. He shared his experiences with the types of sounds and nuances produced by the hands of great drummers like Tony Williams and Elvin Jones. At the end of the clinic, Eric was kind enough to allow the audience to try each of the vintage cymbals he had played.

**Gerry Brown**, renowned drummer with Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, George Benson, Lionel Ritchie, and Chick Corea, shared lessons learned from decades of playing with great artists. He began by saying, "Drumming is not a sprint. It's a marathon. Just take your time. Whatever kind of music it is, swing, country, or other, the groove don't lie. Stay in that groove lane. You and the bass player are the foundation." Gerry played some iconic Stevie Wonder tunes including "Higher Ground", "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours", and "Another Star" on a great sounding set of GEWA electronic drums. Then he played a cover of Michael Jackson's "Shake Your Body" as a tribute to the great drummer Ed Greene.

**Bobby "T" Torello** (Bobby T Band, Thunderhead, Grace Slick, Black Oak Arkansas, Johnny Winter, Michael Bolton) gave a heartfelt clinic. In addition to rocking many great cuts from his previous body of work (on a thunderous set of WFL III drums), Bobby passionately shared his life lessons from many trials and tribulations along the way. In 1978, Bobby had realized his dream and was touring and recording with Johnny Winter. His career took off but as Bobby described it, "drugs and alcohol started taking over my life." With the support of his wife, Bobby successfully went through rehab and has been 15 years clean and sober. He now has own band, Bobby T. and the Namedroppers, and remains "hell bent in what I do." Bobby's longevity and perseverance in the music business is indeed a testament to his dedication and love for music.

**Scott Pellegrom** (SP3, Remedy, Nocturnal Lights) is a technically proficient and creative drummer/clinician and has been called the "mad scientist". Scott's drum clinic was introduced by Dom Famularo, who described him as, "not an out-of-the-box drummer because there is no box. This is what allows our art form to move forward." Scott began by thanked Dom for paving the way and being so inspiring. He went on to share examples about drumming, rudiments, technicality, groove, colors and textures, and improvisation. Scott performed an incredible drum solo which demonstrated his unique perspective on drums and drumming, and his technical prowess.

**Paul Wertico** (Paul Wertico Trio, Pat Metheny, Paul Winter, and educator at Roosevelt University) gave the final clinic featured. Paul started off by talking about keeping in shape and eating healthy. When Paul saw Gerry Brown, he said, "Hey, we're both still here and doing it (drumming)." He continued, "This instrument can keep you healthy. This is a physical instrument. The more relaxed you play; it just becomes this flow." Paul described his overall approach to drumming: "I've never thought about playing a certain rudiment while playing. It's all about phrasing and talking. Luckily, I have really good time. That's why I got the gig with Metheny, I never got off of the click. There's a couple of ways to play, inorganic and organic. Neither is better than the other, it just depends on the type of music you're playing. Inorganic playing is where you're sub-dividing everything; sixteenth notes, triplets and so on. When I'm playing organically, I'm thinking point 'A' to point 'B', just getting from here to there. As long as I can do that, I can talk to the instrument." Paul proceeded to perform several classic Metheny tunes with his characteristic groove, fluidity, and style. It was an incredibly inspiring clinic which ended with a standing ovation.

Overall, it was a tremendous show. Rob Cook, the show's producer said, "I think this show, more than any previous shows, really lived up to the handle 'The Drummers Family Reunion.' So many old and new friends were there. At least a dozen exhibitors have been attending this show for 30+ years! Dom Famularo helped with emceeing several of the clinics and announcing raffle winners. It was fun to watch people light up when they realized Dom was there. He brings electricity to any room full of drummers!" There were tons of raffle prizes, exhibits, percussive gear to buy (and sell), friends to meet and greet, and a good time to be had for all. If you've never made it to the Chicago Drum Show, you really owe it to yourself to make the trip! The 33rd Chicago Drum Show is already scheduled for May 18-19, 2024, at the Kane County Fairgrounds in St. Charles, IL.

# DW's Alex Gonzalez Collectors Series Icon Snare Drum

## Iconic drummer, Iconic Snare Drum

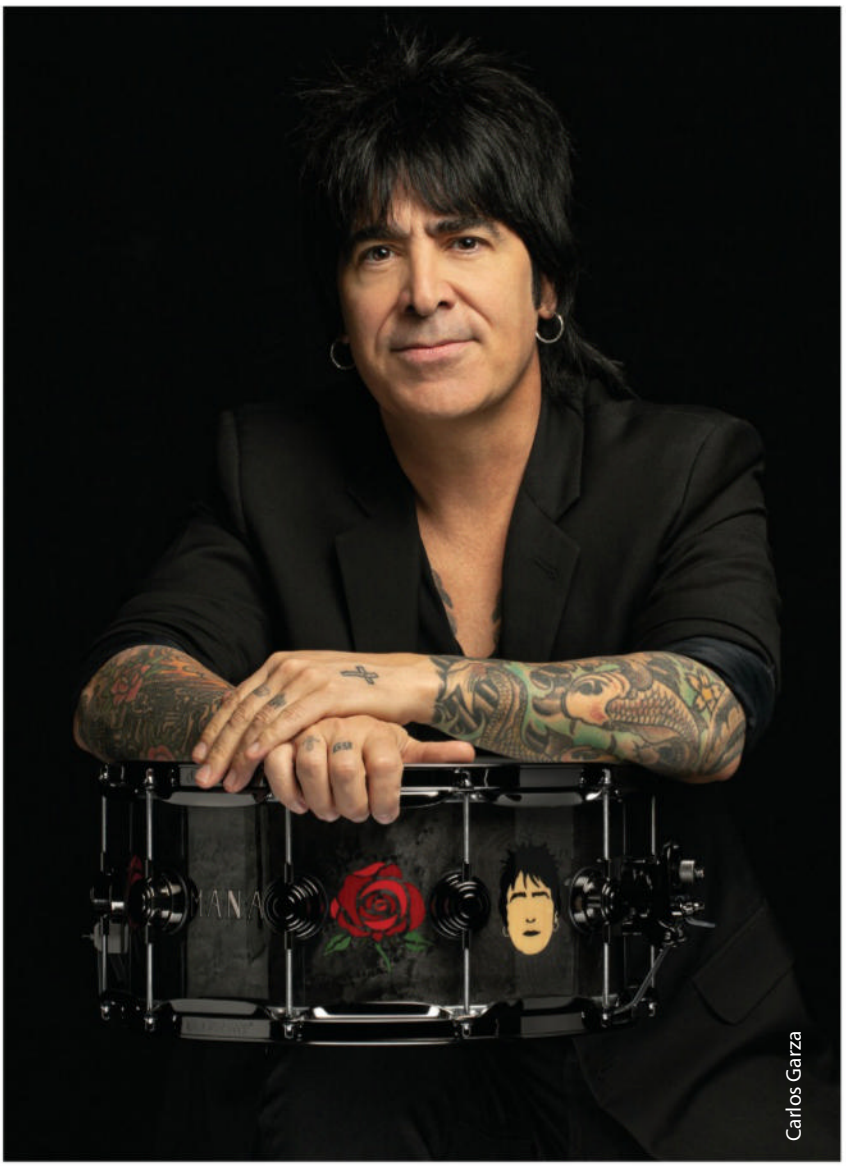
By Brian Hil

Drum Workshop sent *Modern Drummer* over one of their newest Collector Series Icon snare drums for a look-see. The Alex Gonzalez DW Collector's Series ICON snare drum was created as a tribute to Latin Pop icons Mana and their legendary drummer Alex Gonzalez. After joining Mana at the age of 15, Alex's backbeat has helped power the band to the incredible international success of a dozen Grammy awards and over 40 million albums sold.

The specs are pretty straight forward and in line with DW's usual quality in top-shelf drums. Alex's Icon snare features an 11-ply HVLT North American Hard Maple shell with a Birdseye maple outer veneer that is dyed gray and features laser-cut wood inlays of the Mana logo, Alex's signature and iconic rose logo in red, along with his portrait. The intricate inlays are crafted from dyed pear wood, koto, and tulip woods. No reinforcement rings are necessary nor does DW have any company badges on the exterior of the shell.

This limited-edition 6.5" X 14" snare is also fitted with premium black nickel DW hardware. It features a MAG Throw-off, five position (5P) butt plate, True-Hoops, True-Pitch tuning rods, DW's Turret style lugs, and DW heads by Remo on the top and bottom round out the specs.

The sound of this drum really speaks. It responded well to all tunings with a lot of control. Alex's




Carlos Garza

Icon drum is sensitive at low dynamics and really barked at higher playing levels. It really cuts through and I loved the rim shots and cross-sticks! The five position snare throw-off gives great "on-the-fly" snare tension adjustments for those quick changes that need to happen fast.

The DW Alex Gonzalez Icon snare is a great drum for that Modern Pop sound that fills arenas and those inherently loud environments. This drum will not get lost in a big mix. It performed great for me in a wide variety of settings and situations.

This beautiful and artful drum would be great for anyone who happens to be a big fan of Mana and Alex Gonzalez or any serious collector of high quality snare drums. In researching this drum on-line I found a lot of info dedicated to this drum and Alex. You can hear examples of the sound of the drum with Alex playing his newest favorite snare. DW will only be producing 250 of these remarkable snare drums with only 125 drums meant for the USA market. Each drum includes a deluxe DW carrying case with a numbered and signed certificate of authenticity from John Good.

However, this is not an inexpensive instrument. I found it on-line for around $1799.00 as of this writing. The proceeds from this drum will help to support one of Alex's favorite charities. The DW quality and over-all sound speaks for itself! Check it out at **dwdrums.com.**

# Latin Percussion Single Brass Timbales

## Versatility and Choices

By Brian Hill

Latin Percussion (LP) has been around for decades. I am literally still using LP cowbells I bought back in the 1970's. (No, I'm not that old, I just started young!) LP is not only known for making outstanding cowbells but they have led the way in hand and ethnic percussion instruments as well as congas, bongo drums, and (yes) timbales.

As part of the "LP Your Kit" line of percussion instruments, LP sent *Modern Drummer* a pair of their new, single-mount brass timbales. This was quite a fun review for me as I have been an "LP Guy" for a long time and have spent a lot time playing their timbales and most other things LP. So let's see what could possibly different in an already impressive line of timbales.

LP sent over a two 6.5" deep, brass timbales that come in 13" and 14" diameters. They looked pretty cool with the brass shells and chrome plated hoops, tuning and mounting hardware. I think they have a bit of a vintage look with the chrome and brass comingling together. I also noticed that they had some real weight to them. These drums have the same features as LP's Prestige Timbales, but are offered as singles.

A new, hefty counter hoop design is supporting a new "top-side" tuning system that allows the player to tune the drum from the top side (instead of from underneath the rim). The patented top-tuning systems also keeps the tuning rod below the hoop so as to not interfere with playing. Each drum comes with a very cool tuning key that not only fits the timbale but also has a secondary key built in to tune standard drum tuning rods.

The other major point of these drums is that the mounting bracket fits any standard mounting arm ranging from 3/8" to ½" for virtually unlimited placement in any drum or percussion set-up. But, if the practicality of using a mounting arm isn't there, a snare stand will always do the trick.

The sound is very strong, as would be expected. A brass shell is a bit warmer and darker than standard steel drums, but with a very bright tone. Cascara rhythms on the side of the shell are cutting and dry. Whether as a single or a pair, these timbale drums offer a great voicing option that delivers a high quality, musical element to your set-up.

The LP Single Mount Brass Timbales are just another great example of what LP does: lead the way in percussion instruments! I found the timbales online for around $369.99 each. Check'em out at **lpmusic.com.**

# Latin Percussion Rhythm Rods

## New Tools for the Toolbox

By Brian Hill

The other half of my LP box had a nice assortment of Rhythm Rods. LP sent over three different pairs: Synthetic Lightweight and Heavyweight models, and the Natural Rhythm Rods. I tried these alternative implements on just about everything I could hit. While they were good on regular drums, I thought they did extremely well on Cajons, Congas, Cymbals, Gongs, and other percussion instruments. If you've used other, thinner varieties of "multi-rods" before, these will be a heavier, thicker version that will bring additional sonic timbres and possibilities to the table.

The Natural set was made of an organic material the resembled a very thin bamboo material and measured 13" in length by an inch diameter. The Synthetic versions were made of a premium-grade polymer material and measured 14" in length with the Lightweight model at 7/8" diameter and the Heavyweight model at 1 1/8" diameter. These rods also have an exclusive reinforced core for superior balance, stability, and playability.

Both the Light and Heavyweight models come in two versions: The "straight" version and the Adjustable Core version. With the Adjustable Core Rhythm Rods you get all of the advantages of the "straight" version, but you also get the option of the Adjustable Core. This feature gives you the ability to push an embedded synthetic rod (or core) forward, out the end of the Rhythm Rod about an inch beyond the end of the implement. (Much like a retractable wire brush.) This will give you greater articulation in sound from whatever you're hitting. I like options!

As far as which Rhythm Rod is the best one for you, that depends on you and what you're doing. For me, my favorite was the Adjustable Core, Lightweight Synthetic Rod model. All of the Rhythm Rods brought out new possibilities in sonic sounds and had very comfortable rubber grips that made them fun to use and explore different sounds.

The LP Rhythm Rods are another great example of what LP does: lead the way in percussion instruments! I found the Rhythm Rods online at $29.99 each. I can't think that anyone would go wrong choosing any of the Rhythm Rods. We've been trusting them for decades to provide us with great gear that not only works, but stands the test of time! Check'em out at **lpmusic.com.**

Mike DeMillia

# Godsmack's Shannon Larkin

## Mountain vs. Machine

By Mark Griffith

As you walk in drummer Shannon Larkin's house there are no pictures of himself, or Gold or Platinum records on the wall. The only thing that would clue you into the fact that you are in a drummer's home is the cool furniture made of drums by placing plate glass on the top of old drums and sets from past tours. He is a humble guy, and a great drummer. And he has one more musical mountain to climb.

**MD**: After 20 years in Godsmack, numerous tours, and seven records, let's first look back at your career leading up to Godsmack. I know you have been in a few other successful bands along the way that have been signed to major labels and had done some heavy touring. How did you get into the band?

**SL**: Sully, our fearless leader, main songwriter, and an amazing drummer, and I met in 1987. I was playing with Wrathchild America, and Sully had a band called Lex Luthor. They opened for us in North Carolina, and we were just hanging out all night, we exchanged numbers and for the next 20 years we remained friends. I was actually his first call for Godsmack back in the day when they were starting to sell out clubs and sell a bunch of CD's. Then all the major labels started sniffing around and Sully called me again, but I was in California by then and I had already joined the band Amen. I'd spent a couple of years with Amen in the clubs in LA and I'm a very loyal person, and we had just signed a deal with Ross Robinson and Roadrunner Records, so I stayed with Amen. Then Godsmack sold 5 million CD's and Amen sold 5000. I thought I had missed my opportunity for success. I did a couple more years with Amen, made

some great records, did some tours and it was all wonderful. I had already been touring with Wrathchild since I was 15 and playing in bars since I was 12, and had played on a lot of records that I'm very proud of, I'd done some amazing shows, I got to play for Black Sabbath and basically all my musical dreams had come true; except for "actual success" in the music business, which to me just means making enough money to never need another job.

This is a very hard business though, and in 2002 I thought I was going to quit, I was really done. I was gonna keep on playing drums for sessions because I love drumming. I would never stop playing the drums, but I was done being in "the machine" of this business, I felt like I had done everything. I climbed all the mountains that I had ever dreamed of as a child, except being a "rock star," and at that point with a baby girl at home, I hadn't achieved any kind of financial savings or financial stability, so I enrolled into a cosmetology school. My mom is a hairdresser and I watched her as I grew up. She had a shop in the basement of our house where people would come and get their hair cut; she made people happy and got paid for it. It was the same as what I was doing as an entertainer. I always liked cutting hair, so my plan was to have a rock'n'roll hair salon on Melrose in Hollywood. I had the whole thing really planned out. I even called Sharon Osbourne, and Ozzy said he'd let me cut his hair. It was a real plan, and literally two weeks after I quit Amen, Sully called and said their drummer wasn't working out. By this point they had sold millions of records. I thought I might have one more mountain to climb, so I joined Godsmack, and here we are 20 years later.

**MD**: The new record *Lighting Up the Sky* is absolutely ripping!

**SL**: Thank you! Fittingly, it's my favorite one of all. It was the easiest one we've ever done, it all just fell together, of course we had the extra time because of the pandemic, as far as actual recording goes it was a drama free recording process.

**MD**: What was some of the traditional drama that was eliminated?

**SL**: We just had more time to make it. The drama in the studio was usually because Sully has a very distinct vision about everything that is Godsmack. Sully is also a great drummer, so there would be struggles between what parts I would come up with and what parts he had heard in his head when he wrote a song. Of course, as the drummer, I believe that you have to defer to the songwriter, that's our job. In the past, I would also speak up with ideas, in that regard I'm very confident, so that would sometimes create some drama for us. It was never anything that made me want to quit the band, but it did make recording something that I really had to focus on. I had to crush my ego and play for the song. When you have someone else telling you what to play and your ego is telling you that people will think that you wrote a drum part that you didn't and you lose sight of the important part, the song. That is just ego. It can go either way. People could think that I created a radical drum fill that Sully actually wrote, or vice-versa. But on this last one, everything felt right with no drama at all. It's just like any band that's been around this long with any amount of success and making records for decades. There's all kinds of ups and downs, there were certain records where our guitar player and Sully weren't even speaking. Being the same four guys in a band for over 20 years is a roller coaster ride, it's much easier said than done. But it has its rewards. I must tell you, I'm 56 and I've waited all my life to be on the cover of *Modern Drummer*. This is an important moment for me.

**MD**: You've been through the machine of the music business. You've bounced

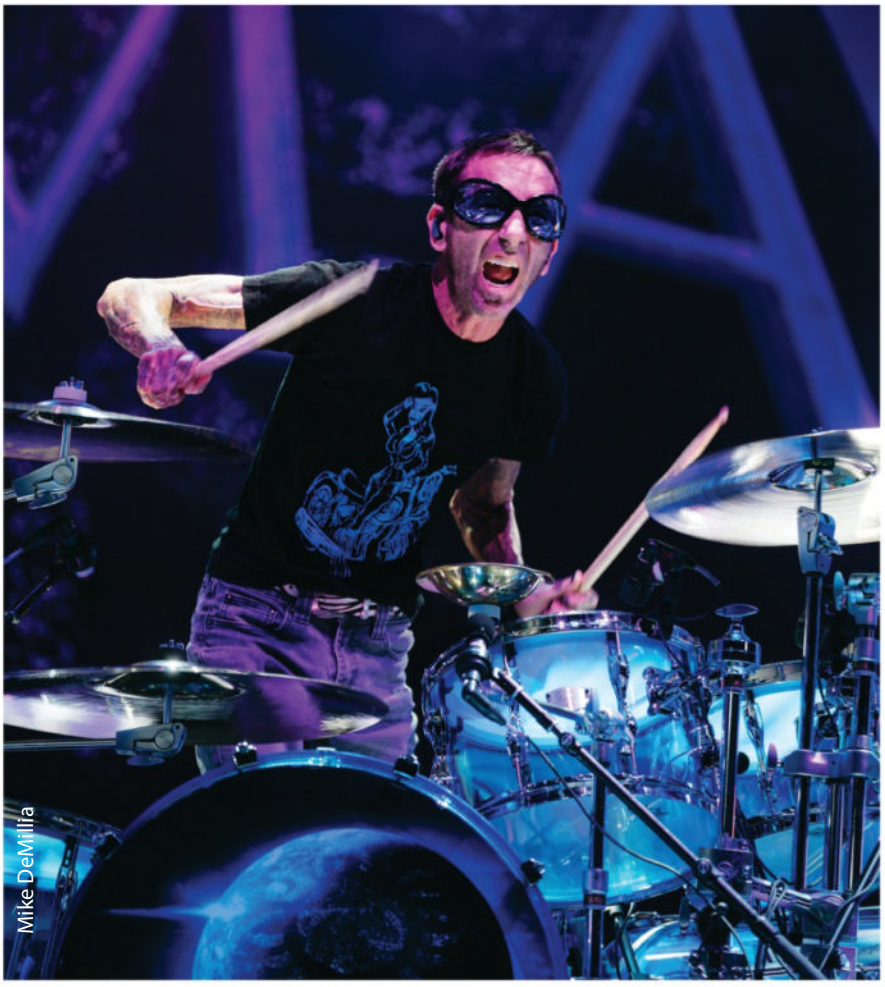
Mike DeMillia

from several successful bands that have recorded for major labels, done major tours while going from band to band to band. You're (what I call) a lifer. That's means achieving longevity. In this business, longevity is the biggest compliment anybody can give or get.

**SL**: I swear to you, I always say that as well. People mention the gold and platinum records, all the awards and nominations, even the cover *Modern Drummer*… But the badge that I wear proudly, is the badge of longevity!

**MD**: The of bands that you have been in is amazing: Wrathchild America, Amen, Ugly Kid Joe, and Godsmack. You have done sessions and records with Glenn Tipton from Judas Priest, Glassjaw, Stone Sour, even Vanilla Ice. Let's talk about how your long drumming career has evolved.

**SL**: In the mid 70s, my family was raised with the radio. It was always on. After dinner my dad would (famously) drag us all downstairs and play records and dance around for an hour or so. My dad was insistent that we were not going to sit around and watch TV all night. In 1975 or 76 I heard Kiss' "Calling Dr. Love" on the radio and it called out to me. I'd never heard anything quite like it. I asked my mom to buy me a K-Tel compilation record of the modern hits that included Kiss "Calling Dr. Love." But (thankfully,) it had other bands on it as well. I remember "The Funky Worm" by the Ohio Players and all these different songs that were happening on radio at the time. It was a diverse time for popular music. But I got the record for "Calling Dr. Love" by Kiss. I would just play that over and over in my room. My sister finally came in and said if you like this song so much, the band has a whole record out, but in the meantime listen to this. She gave me Rush's *Hemispheres* on red vinyl, and it changed my life. It didn't call me to the drums, but it introduced the creativity of making music, the importance of the drums to the music, and the stories that Neil Peart told with his lyrics— I became a huge fan of that record. Then she gave me *Led Zeppelin II*, and the drums called out to me. I remember specifically thinking I'm going to be a drummer, I want to be John Bonham. Then I went out and bought Kiss, Aerosmith, AC / DC, Ted Nugent, and other heavy 70s records. I never thought about anything else to do with my life. I started practicing eight hours a day, I was practicing every minute from when I got home from school until dinner, and after dinner I'd go back out to the garage and practice some more. I became obsessed with drums and heavier music. My parents had a good and eclectic musical taste. Early on, I heard (and loved) Ringo, Keith Moon, Ginger Baker, Mitch Mitchell, and Charlie Watts. Those were the crazy drummers that I wanted to be. I heard Carmine Appice on the Rod Stewart album doing those quads between his hands and feet, so I added a second bass drum, and I got the famous Carmine Appice *Realistic Double Bass Drum* book. Later, in the 80s I heard Motörhead *No Sleep 'til Hammersmith,* I had never heard double bass used in that way. Then there was the explosion of Lars Ulrich and Dave Lombardo. I grew up in the DC-Baltimore area, so couple all of that with the really fast punk rock like Minor Threat and Bad Brains that were around DC at the time, those bands were life changing. Metallica was creating a new genre called thrash metal. It's no doubt that my young man's brain was about speed, speed, speed!!! It was always about how fast can one play? That's one of the many things that helped me and guitarist Terry Carter create Wrathchild. We started Wrathchild when I was 10 and Terry was 12. We spent six years touring across the country in a van. We had our own truck, lights, and PA. Back in the day you had to start that way. You would play the clubs and hone your craft while you were becoming a better musician. You learned what humility was, and if you were selling out the clubs, the labels would start coming around.


Mike DeMilia

The badge that I wear proudly, is the badge of longevity!

We signed to Atlantic when I was 20, we were Wrathchild before we became Wrathchild America, because there was a band in England already called Wrathchild. Wrathchild America went from 1988 to 94. We put out a couple records on Atlantic, toured with Testament, Pantera, and played shows with Metallica, Slayer, and many more cool bands. After the deal was done with Atlantic, we put out two more records on an independent label under the name Souls at Zero, but it was the same four guys. We were playing heavy music. When we looked at what was going on around us and what our music was like, we realized that we didn't need to change, so we just changed our name and continued on. We had already been together 12 years, we were like brothers, and we really believed in our band and in ourselves. The name change wasn't a negative thing we thought if we gotta be an underground man we gotta be an underground band. But it turns out that it just didn't happen for Souls at Zero, to this day I think that first Souls at Zero (released in 1993) record is great. We opened for Pantera for three months in America, that was our last run as Wrathchild. I'd known Dimebag and Vince (Vinnie Paul) since way before both of our bands were signed. When Wrathchild would go through the Dallas-Fort Worth area those guys would always come out and hear us, we ended up being friends. There were times I would go and stay at their house. They had a studio down in the basement and me and Dime would just go down there and make strange music.

Jessi Lynn Brothers

**MD**: So many musicians today talk about how nice Dime and Vinnie Paul were, and how they really helped a lot of young bands.

**SL**: They really had that sense of wonderment and awe. Those feelings were all around them. It didn't matter if they were playing a club, an arena, or a stadium. Those feelings were always there. They had a creative energy on their instruments, they were just unstoppable. And it didn't matter what was going on, they were always about the music. With them everything was mayhem and chaos, their music was super exciting, but there was a sense of danger there. They were everything that I dreamed of when I was idolizing crazy dudes like Keith Moon. But those were different times, and things have changed in good ways, and somehow, I'm still alive. But those guys just brought an energy and put a fire in everybody's ass! Pantera didn't sound like a typical thrash metal band. I'm happy that they're out there again. They couldn't have chosen two better guys than Zakk Wylde and Charlie Benante for this reunion. Charlie is a legend that (pretty much) invented the blast beat. If you can invent something in this business that's incredible.

People always bag on Lars. Until you have lived a minute in Lars' shoes and create what he has– I just tell them all to shut up. He's not just a drummer in the band, he's something more. A lot of those ideas came from his vision and him wanting to sound different. Lars is an original. He has won in a world where it seems that you have to sound like everybody else to get signed and everything on the radio sounds the same. "The machine" has taken over. Back in the day, if you were different that's when you would get interest from labels and the business. Nowadays it's all about you know how many "likes" you have.

After 12 years in Wrathchild, I met Whitfield Crane of Ugly Kid Joe, they had just come off a big hit record. I was coming from a punk and thrash metal kind of world and by joining Ugly Kid Joe I really learned how to crush the ego part of my drumming and play for the song. Dave Fortman was the guitarist in Ugly, and he went on to produce Godsmack, Evanescence, and Slipknot. He was the guitar player for my six years and three records with Ugly Kid Joe. Dave taught me so much about songwriting and melody. He taught me that no one is going to remember your drum fills, they're going to remember the chorus. As a drummer, I learned a lot about playing within the music because I joined a band that was already successful in the commercial rock atmosphere, that was a whole new world for me.

When I joined Ugly, they already had all their writers and singers, but I've always written lyrics (probably from the Neal Peart influence.) I still have all of my old lyric notebooks that I have written, going back to when I was a kid. That is probably why I have always had side projects. Even when I was in Wrathchild, Ugly Kid Joe, Amen, and today with Godsmack, I have always had side projects. Many people are surprised to learn that most of those bands have been in a very different musical style than my main bands.

**MD**: What is it about your drumming and your style as a musician that brought you to all of these bands?

**SL**: I don't want to sound like I'm bragging about anything, so I'm going to tell it as I remember it, this is how I see it at this very moment.

**MD**: That's fine, I'm asking you to talk about yourself which (I know) is not real

# Larkin's 2023 Godsmack Kit

Yamaha Drums
Sabian Cymbals
Vic Firth Sticks: American Custom Rock
Remo Heads: Coated Ambassadors top, Clear Ambassadors on bottom.

I've been playing Yamaha Drums for over 20 years now. Godsmack's deal with Yamaha is that for each new tour, which comes for us every four years, they give Sully and me a new kit. He plays drums during every show. We like our kits to match, and match the artwork of the record, so we have gotten custom paint jobs and stuff like that in the past. For our Legends Rise tour we had Yamaha Oak Absolute Customs that were wrapped in chrome, and they sounded amazing. That was the best bass drum I've ever played; I will use that 24" Oak Absolute Custom kick on every record that I make for the rest of my life. That kick, the Roy Haynes hammered copper snare, or the Mike Bordin copper snare; I use them on everything. We call the Roy Haynes drum "Copperhead." I'll put both of them up against a 1977 Black Beauty and the copper Yamaha's win every time. The producers love those drums. I've used them for the last four Godsmack records and tours.

For this tour we wanted to use clear acrylic shells with blue LED lights inside, but Yamaha doesn't make clear acrylic shells. So the great Greg Crane at Yamaha found a company to make us two clear acrylic shelled kits in 12, 14, 16, 18, 24 and 22 kick drums and a few Octobans. The 14" tom is a shorter 9x14 so it can be positioned correctly with my big bass drum. Our FOH man Scott loves the acrylic drums, and I love the way they sound.

My cymbals are Sabian, I have been with them for over 20 years too. They are a super innovative company. My main crashes are an 18" AA Medium Crash, 19" AA Rock Crash, and a 20" Medium or Rock Crash, my main ride is a 22", I have a 20" and a 22" China type, a splash, and an icebell.

I have also always suffered from cramping on stage, I always stretch and warm up, but I still have had cramping issues. Now I drink a supplement called L M Ent to help with muscle cramping. Recently, I talked to a doctor that thinks that cramping stems from anxiety and stress. So now before shows I do some mental stretching, meditation, and positive thought reinforcement to help with the cramping problems, and I haven't had a muscle cramp since.

"*comfortable*."

**SL**: When I started playing in clubs, I was 12. My parents had to bring me to the clubs because in West Virginia you had to be 16, if you were under the age of 16 your parents would have to chaperone you. We did four one-hour sets a night. I was like a rock star because I was just a little kid, and guitarist Terry Carter was 15 and a real prodigy (he still is.)

Up until that point most of my favorite drummers didn't really have much showmanship. But I was a kid, and my teenage ego was trying to get attention. I wanted to be Angus Young on the drums. As "fate" would have it, I was playing basketball and I broke my collarbone. They put me in a hard cast that went around my entire torso, but I could still move my wrists. I had my left wrist free, but my arm was locked in a cast. The doctor said I could still play drums, so I raised my snare super high and lowered my hi-hat. I started playing with my right arm underneath my left arm and my left arm over my right. After six weeks of playing like that, it became natural. That's how I developed my style of showmanship. I started alternating my hands on the snare while I was playing the hi-hat or the crash-ride, and people started making up names (like the "swim move") for what I was doing. I called it "slink back." At that point I had never seen anybody else do that, now every metal drummer does it. Today, I hope a bunch of dudes from back in the day would admit that they were influenced not by my playing per se, but by my style of playing and showmanship. The guys who kept developing this style ended up being some of my favorite drummers, and exciting players! There were a bunch of drummers in those times of hard rock and heavy metal bands that were not just playing the drums but emoting the drums with a very strong style of showmanship, and I feel like I had a hand in that and was a stylistic influence.

**MD**: Since you hit the scene when you were very young what would you tell young drummers today about hitting the scene when they are very young?

**SL**: I can't really talk much about helping them in in in the modern music landscape because I came up in a whole different era, I don't even understand the music business today. I usually just try to tell younger guys things that will help them survive. The first things I always say is wear earplugs and that nobody wants an asshole in their band. Stay humble because it takes as much luck as it takes talent to make it in this business, that's just the way it is. I have heard bands with the best songs that never got heard. Less than 1% of bands even get their demo heard, let alone get a deal. Less than that even get two years in the business once they get a deal. Less than 1% of that group makes a charting record. And even less than that earn any sort of Gold or Platinum records. This is the hardest business in the world. You gotta have thick skin, you gotta be able to take criticism really well, and stay off the hard drugs. And remember, everybody that you meet on the way up you're gonna meet on the way down.

I started alternating my hands on the snare while I was playing the hi-hat or the crash-ride, and people started making up names (like the "swim move") for what I was doing. I called it "slink back."

**MD**: To fast forward to today, this new Godsmack record is just killer! But is this actually the last Godsmack record?

**SL**: Yes, it is. It's been over 20 years, we've had success, and we're very grateful. Sometimes it gets misconstrued, I want to pick my words very carefully because I don't want to offend any great bands like Judas Priest and Cheap Trick, I have nothing but respect for those bands; and I'm speaking for myself *not* Godsmack… But we all started really young, and we have been doing this for years. We are "lifers" as you said, we're all still friends. For me, there was always a mountain to climb, my mountain was to make it and be a rock star. Godsmack lives in a musical style called "active rock." Active rock is comprised of about 8 million listeners, Godsmack has been on top of the "active rock" world for 20 years, we ruled the roost in our little world. When I joined the band the next three records were number one on Billboard, we climbed that mountain. Historically, after most bands reach their mid 50s and get into their 60s and 70s, you go from selling out arenas to playing the State Fair. I mean absolutely no disrespect, but I don't believe Godsmack could get any bigger. But the anxiety and pressure of making records, touring, and the pressure of being in this machine becomes like Groundhog Day. You make another record, and you have to go tour to promote it. You always have a product to sell. You have to be grateful for everything, and we are. You can't take anything for granted. The band had a sit down and just talked about it. Sully asked, "What if this was our last record?" Playing live is really where we get our reward and that's where you make your money. Then we realized that we have a two-hour set, and we have ten or twelve #1 hits, we actually realized that our sets aren't even long enough to play all of our top five singles. Then we started thinking, what if we could jump out of the machine now and not have to sell anything because we're all financially stable. We can actually play a greatest hits set right now. We've had a long and great relationship with rock radio. So do we want to keep making records knowing it can't really go up from here? We don't want to alienate our fanbase and do a blues record, a piano record, or a covers record. We figured the best thing we could do for ourselves physically and mentally is not break up and not do the cash cow final tour and charge $400 a ticket. We figured that we would just announce

that we'll stop making records. We're not gonna go away, we'll still be out there playing a set of our hits. The labels have been fantastic, again we're not trying to disrespect anybody, but this will allow us to get out of the machine and away from the constant record cycles and be able to actually say "no" if we want to. That's my take on it.

**MD**: When you guys started the last record, had you already decided that this was going to be the last record?

**SL**: This whole new record/last record conversation is weird because of the pandemic. In 2018, we put out *When Legends Rise* and it was our most successful record ever. There were four number one hits on *When Legends Rise*. Since I've joined the band, we've had a number one hit off each record, but we never had four number one's. So we toured from 2018 until the fall of 2020. We had all this cool stuff planned, we were going to do some shows with Metallica, we had some festivals booked, and then the pandemic hit.

Each record comes with a four-year cycle. We record for a year, support it for two years, and then take a year off. We are blessed and lucky to be able to afford to always take that year off. To be able to step away after three years together adds to the longevity of any band. So we took 2020 off and we thought (like the rest of the world) that everything would be back and great in 2021, well it wasn't. We had built a new studio in Florida, and we started writing in 2021. Then Sully needed a break. When he came back at the end of 2021, we scrapped all but two of the songs. Sully had all this "new ammo" (songs) from a recent break-up. That's the thing about my friend Sully, he gets his heart broken and it really puts him in a dark hole. But he always comes out the other side with a bunch of great tunes. You feel bad for your brother, but you know the band is gonna get some killer songs. That's why I said how easy this record was to make. It's because our main songwriter had a bunch of great songs and great ideas, and the record just wrote itself. When we got into 2022 and the world still wasn't back, we had a window of opportunity and plenty of time to write and record this new record, and for once we were able to choose when we wanted to drop the record. The second time Sully had come down to record is when he came out and said, "What if this what if this was our final record?" The curse of lockdown ended up being a blessing because we were forced to stay home for two years rather than go on tour. Never since the age of 15 has a year gone by when I didn't do a single tour or show. I thought that I might go crazy, but I found a happiness within that. I still hold that happiness, and perhaps I wouldn't have found it without being forced into a different life.

I've been sober for seven years now, and I was a little scared of lockdown. It was a big deal for me to learn that I can indeed be very happy inside with me, and not have to go out on tour. After two decades of putting Godsmack before family and friends, I realized that with a fan base of the best fans in the world that have been loyal throughout our career, we didn't have anything more to prove, and we've done our best. Over the years we have done everything from hard rock and metal to blues rock. Along the way people have said we were selling out, but it all becomes part of the journey, part of the machine. It's nice to have some control amidst the chaos. We have gotten 20 years older, and we have tried to do something a little different with each record and give some diversity to our set because again— We're the ones on stage playing these songs.

Mike DeMillia

There is nostalgia after so long. Are we a nostalgia act? We meet folks constantly that say, "You guys got me through high school!" Carrie Underwood came to our show in Nashville and told us that we were her favorite band in high school! That makes me feel good. Perhaps a bit old, but good.

**MD**: For some reason "nostalgia" has become a derogatory term.

**SL**: That means that you have been around for enough time to have a lot of hits. And that means that you have achieved career longevity, and isn't that what it's all about?

**MD**: I agree.

**SL**: Getting back to climbing mountains, I feel like I have gotten to the top of the mountain. As long as we weren't breaking up and we are still going out on stage in front of fans that love our music, that's always been the reward. Now we just don't have the pressure of having to make hit records.

**MD**: Do you guys enjoy the record making experience?

**SL**: We really enjoy the creative part of four guys being in a room and watching a song be created. It's like seeing a baby being born, then you nurture it and a week later it's grown up and it goes on a record. That's the fun part. But the business and the pressure… Nowadays you look on social media and people say the most horrible things about your new record. Now we have the opportunity to not put ourselves through it anymore, and we can still have the reward of doing the shows.

**MD**: Is the fact that all record sales are at an all-time low become a factor? You put your heart and soul into making a new record, and then a week later it's on YouTube and everybody can listen to it for free. Or you can stream, and the band hardly sees any income from streaming. Did those facts enter into the whole decision?

**SL**: Well, we are old school, and we've watched each record in succession sell less and less over the years as the internet and streaming have become prominent. Even after downloading got fixed, sales kept declining because of streaming. It's not about the rewards and accolades or gold records on the wall. The cool part is as record sales declined, we didn't see our shows drawing any less people. We're still playing the same venues that we have played for 20 years, and we're still getting the same, or better, attendance numbers.

**MD**: Therefore, why spend a year making a record that people are going to stream and listen to on YouTube for free? I get it.

**SL**: I have other mountains to climb. I am 56, I have creative ideas that I want to explore with my drumming.

**MD**: So, what's the next mountain?

**SL**: I'm not quitting, I'm going to continue to play drums, and apply more focus on my side band Spirit Wheel with Terry Carter. Everything has really come full circle. Terry and I started out on that great Wrathchild journey together for 15 or 16 years. Then I went out west and did Amen, Ugly Kid Joe, and now Godsmack. I didn't see Terry for many years. In the meantime, I've always had side projects. When I was out west, I had a punk band, then while I had Amen I had a rockabilly band on the side, when I joined Godsmack I had my band called Another Animal. Around 10 years ago I started getting back into the Blues. I was thinking strategically. Playing in a Blues band never has this big intent of selling out stadiums. The intent is to get as many people as you can in the room, have them hang on every note, hear the source of every hit, and feel the space between the notes. It's very distinct and there's a mastery to that. My idea was to

Paris Visone

Paris Visone

fuse 60s and 70s psychedelic music and Blues, to combine Pink Floyd with B.B. King and have David Bowie as a singer. That whole soundscape came into my head, so I started writing new songs, and called the band the Apocalypse Blues Revue. I had an old Blues singer named Ray, my bassist Brian, and Tony Rombola from Godsmack was playing guitar. We made two records for Mascot and did some touring with Kenny Wayne Sheppard. Then Tony split, and I needed another guitarist.

I had remembered that my old friend Terry Carter had moved to Florida, and I gave him a call. Now, everything is more laid back and it's all about the music, my new band is my Spirit Wheel and the entire intent is different. It's all about why Terry and I started to play music in the first place. I started my career with this guy as a young kid and now after all these years have passed, suddenly I'm playing music with this same dude. Shane Hall is the singer in Spirit Wheel, he has been my drum tech for over 25 years, and he's still my drum tech on tour with me now, but we are both looking forward to the whole dynamic of being band mates. It's a Cinderella story, Shane has never sung in a band other than with me, and our musical chemistry is obvious. Spirit Wheel has recorded a record, it's very blues based, it's not commercial and it's very musician oriented. I am trying not to let it become "Frank Zappa, musicians only music" I grew up on radio, so our music is full of hooks. I'm super excited about it. My kit is also completely different from my Godsmack kit, it has a bunch of percussion and even some electronics scattered throughout. I've also started setting up a second bass drum off to the side. It's a whole different thing.

> Then we realized that we have a two-hour set, and we have ten or twelve #1 hits, we actually realized that our sets aren't even long enough to play all of our top five singles.

**MD**: Where do your blues tastes lie? The blues is a big canvas.

**SL**: Johnny Winter is still my favorite! When Terry and I toured as Wrathchild I'd be listening to punk rock and the early thrash bands like Lars and Metallica; While Terry really schooled me on the blues by playing me B.B. King, Stevie Ray, Robert Johnson, Son House, Walter Trout, Clapton, Howlin Wolf, lots of old and new guys. Terry made me feel it. To me, blues and jazz is right there with punk rock. Those styles were always below the modern cultural radar. My favorite drummer right now is Mark Guiliana, he's a jazz cat from New York that made my favorite record of all time, David Bowie's *Black Star*. His playing (especially on that record,) has completely changed my playing. His feeling for drums and music and the way Bowie was mixing jazz and rock is the most original thing that I have ever heard.

There are a few living drummers who I put on a pedestal. Mark Guiliana, Chad Smith, who (in my opinion) is the greatest living rock drummer, and Zak Starkey. Of course, Zak plays for The Who, but I saw him in Oasis probably 20 years ago. He made their best record called *Don't Believe the Truth*. The way he

Mike DeMilia

plays is just so distinct and English.

The first arena show I ever saw was Judas Priest with Iron Maiden opening, that was another life changer. Priest was touring on *Point of Entry* and Maiden was playing *Killers*, so Maiden still had Clive Burr. He was influential to me because I'd gotten so into the thrash metal and Dave Lombardo that most of my six to eight hours a day of practicing was sitting and reading books with ankle weights on playing double bass patterns. That's how I got up to speed for the Slayer and Metallica style of thrash. Then in the mid-80s, I was glued to the MTV like the rest of the country. I fell in love with The Stray Cats, to this day Slim Jim Phantom is one of my favorite drummers of all time, then I discovered The Police and Stewart Copeland, and Devo who played all these cool and different patterns. I really fell in love with Tommy Aldridge's playing on the Pat Travers *Live* record, and Michael Bland's playing on Prince's *Diamonds and Pearls*. I didn't know it at the time, but my musical taste was very eclectic, and I attribute that to the blessing of being from West Virginia. Growing up in West Virginia me and my friends liked Adam and the Ants, Slayer, Black Flag, *and* Boston. I had other friends turning me on to bands like Budgie, Riot, Y&T, Saxon, and Accept as well. We didn't understand different musical cliques and the different social scenes that were happening. We just loved music!

**MD**: No one ever talks about Adam and the Ants. They had two drummers and played all of that tribal sounding stuff. You had mentioned your many years of sobriety, congrats on that!

**SL**: Thanks. I'm celebrating over seven years now. I started drinking when I was 12. I was enabled by playing music in clubs. Then the 80s were a pretty crazy time for partying, and I was a part of that. But I'm still here living in harmony with myself. For me, drinking became that thing that you dreaded. I woke up in the morning and was putting booze in my coffee. I was hiding it from the band and my family because I was drinking all day. I became that guy. I went through a divorce. I hit bottom when I was leaving our rehearsal place after I drank a bottle of Jack Daniels. I blacked out at 2:30 in the morning and my 1000-pound Harley motorcycle fell on top of me in the parking lot, thank God it happened before I could go out on the road and kill somebody. I came out of the blackout laying in the parking lot with my bike on my ankle, I called a buddy and woke him up and he came and lifted the bike off of me. That made me take a serious look at my life and future.

I was never into therapy, and I never believed in shrinks. I always looked at rock stars in rehab as such a cliché. I was struggling to quit drinking, but the problem was that I'm very disciplined. I have very strong willpower, so I would never be drunk before a show, and I've never been so drunk or high that I couldn't perform or play. I've made a lot of mistakes in life… *just not when I'm playing drums*. So I didn't see it as ruining my life.

But after the bike thing, I called

management and said I don't know what to do but I'm going to die if I don't do something. They contacted Music Cares which is an organization that found a place for me called Recovery Unplugged. They have a unique program that uses music as the focus to help addicts and alcoholics find yourself in the stillness within you. I think the music aspect of recovery allowed me to open my mind to therapy and try to figure out why I'm like this. It worked for me. I spent 30 days in there, and I've never drank again. However, being in this business every concert is like a party that we're hosting. My biggest fear was how I was going to be happy and be a rock star if I can't party with people? What I didn't realize and what spiritualism helped me realize is that happiness is within us, and we all have it. Everything else is secondary to happiness. As soon as I got out of rehab I purposely went to bars and started watching the bands and sitting by people at the bar drinking shots, all while NOT drinking. I threw myself right into it, because I knew that the only way to survive in this business was to be around drinking and drugs and be happy around it. You just make a conscious decision and realize that you like to be happy, and life is way better without something, whether it's a woman or drugs or alcohol. You just have to take the blinders off, and you'll be able to do it. I really found happiness; therapy works! After I went through that, and Sully lost a couple close friends to addiction, Godsmack started The Scars Foundation, anyone can go to **Godsmack.com** if they are reading this and have any addiction issues. The Scars Foundation is a worldwide nonprofit that has all these people and therapists to talk with you to about addiction issues.

I am well aware of the "tradition" of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. I've had my problems, so I'm not going to get all *holier than thou*. But I will say to everyone out there to stay off of hard drugs, know what you are in for when you go down that path, be aware of yourself, and recognize the problems when they arise.

**MD**: Unfortunately, the list of musicians with addiction issues is very long and unfortunately the list doesn't look like it's going to end anytime soon. What's coming up for Godsmack and your new band Spirit Wheel?

**SL**: Godsmack is on a six week break then we're gonna tour all the way up until December. My plan is to shop this Spirit Wheel record that we've already recorded. And the good news is I don't care about sales. I can put it out myself, nowadays you can self-release and just hire a promotion company. I don't really need the algorithm of "the machine," and I'm not worried about making my mortgage payment or whatever—I just don't care anymore about all that stuff. But I do want Spirit Wheel to be heard because I feel like there's ears out there like mine that would really love and enjoy this band, I do want to play this for some proper labels, but with the attitude of curiosity over expectation, and knowing that I can release it myself. The music is deep and spiritual, and the band feels fresh and makes you feel young again. It makes me feel like there's another mountain to climb.

My next mountain could have been painting, it could have been writing fiction, I have multiple horror novels that are already written. But for now, the main thing that I want to do is Spirit Wheel recordings and tours. We're a unique band, kind of like Gov't Mule. They are one of my favorite bands, but most folks have never heard of them. Kenny Wayne Sheppard is one of my modern idols. We toured with him with Apocalypse Blues. He had one bus pulling a trailer. The whole band and crew travelled like a family. That's what I'm trying to replicate, no drama, no pressure from the business and the music industry, and we can dictate when and where we perform. I don't really care if people love it or they hate it, but I do want to have fun and age gracefully in this business. I still love having the sweaty ass, and the ugly hands of a drummer!

Mike DeMillia

**Check out Shannon's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com**

# Joe Farnsworth

## Playing from the Past, and for the Future

### By Mark Griffith

I tell drum students this all of the time. If you become a music major in college, pay as much attention to your peers as you do to your teachers. You can learn as much (and maybe more) from your fellow students as you do in class. Sometimes teachers have to be diplomatic, but your peers tell you *the truth*. I know this because it happened to me. I went to William Paterson College and the first two drummers that I heard were (fellow students) Bill Stewart and Joe Farnsworth. I thought, if this is what the students sounded like, (they both sounded amazing,) I'm in trouble. Then "Farns" set me straight.

For the last 37 years Joe Farnsworth has been a mainstay on the New York Jazz and worldwide drumming scene. He is carrying the torch of the New York City tradition of jazz drumming. Joe has always been a "traditionalist," but now he is getting into new musical territory, powering up as a bandleader, and accepting his role as jazz elder statesman. He was (a little) rough around the edges in school, but he taught me some essential lessons. Now I am proud to have him share some important lessons with the readers of *Modern Drummer.*

William Brown

**JF**: When I first got to New York, I was all about Max, Philly Joe, and all those guys. Then I heard Ralph Peterson play at my brother John's senior recital at Rutgers, Ralph blew my mind. Then I saw Marvin "Smitty" Smith with the Jazztet and I got a little nervous. After seeing Tain with Wynton and The Black Codes band, I knew the NY jazz scene was rough. These guys were playing all this complicated stuff between the breaks, there were fills everywhere, and everyone was swinging, especially Tain! This was a different sort of drumming from what I had heard before. Everyone seemed like they were going that way. I thought that I was in real trouble.

**MD**: I remember that feeling.

**JF**: Then I happened into a club and saw Louis Hayes playing a brush solo. It was like a gift from God. That was an epiphany and it told me to just keep going, you're okay.

**MD**: You have had a busy 30 years since school, working as a sideman with Benny Golson, Cedar Walton, McCoy Tyner, Gary Bartz, Horace Silver, Wynton Marsalis, Pharoah Sanders, George Coleman, Eric Alexander, Harold Mabern, Diana Krall, and more… But you have also released some wonderful records as a leader. I love how your records are designed to have you framing one of your legendary musical heroes. Those records have featured, Cedar Walton, Kenny Barron, and Wynton Marsalis. But your new record is called *In What Direction are You Headed?* Now you are framing guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel. It seems like things are changing. Can you explain what that title means? What direction you are now heading?

**JF**: I learned at the feet of Harold Mabern and George Coleman. Those guys can make any tune sound special. When I play with them, I want to play music that the musicians want to play, I want to feed off of their wisdom. The freer they are, the freer I am.

The beginnings of the *In What Direction are You Headed* started when Billy Higgins died. I followed Billy around everywhere. In fact, you and I watched him together at Bradley's a few times. His passing was the beginning of me feeling like my leader was no longer around. That left a big void and had a huge effect on me. When pianist Harold Mabern died, that left a huge void in my life. I had spent years playing with him and booking gigs for us because nobody would help us except Dan Israel.

I put a lot of energy and focus through Harold, Billy Higgins, Pharoah Sanders, and Cedar Walton, but Harold and I had a group together and I started booking him. When Harold died, I was playing the Vanguard with guitarist Peter Bernstein. Pete always had his own sound, his own tunes, his own style. He was free to be himself. That is when my direction hit me. I had spent a lot of time telling (or trying to tell) Max Roach's and Billy Higgins' story. When I went to William Paterson, the two "schools" I really wanted to go to were the schools of Cedar Walton and the school of George Coleman. It just so happened that Billy Higgins played with both of them. I wanted to understand what Billy played and feel what that was, and I did that through working with both Cedar and George.

**When Billy Higgins would walk to the drums with that smile, the whole room would light up, even before he got to the drums.**

When Covid hit, everything slowed down and I started thinking about some of the things that musicians have said to me through the years. I used to do drum battles at Smoke with Kenny Washington. Al Foster came and sat right next to my hi-hats once, he was looking right at me. As he was leaving, he said, "Just be true to yourself," and then he left. I wondered what that meant? Then I realized— I could tell you what Max Roach is, and I can tell you what Billy Higgins is, but what the hell is Joe Farnsworth? I realized that I had spent so much time trying to play with certain people, that I hadn't learned who I was.

During Covid I did tribute videos to Billy Higgins, Harold Mabern, Roy Haynes, Jimmy Cobb, and Max Roach. Then I started doing a series called *A Time to Swing*. It was a tribute to all kinds of great players. I focused on musicians from Philadelphia, Chicago, Memphis, and I just kept going with players from Latin America, Canada, Russia, and the rest of Europe. I've made three *A Time to Swing* videos with hundreds of people. During my tribute to Jimmy Cobb, Billy Hart talked about a drum battle he did with Philly Joe Jones and Al Foster.

**MD**: That's on a Philly Joe Jones record called Philly Joe Jones Quintet Plus Two *Drums Night at Storyville* that I have.

**JF**: Yup. Apparently, Papa Joe Jones was the MC that night, and Max Roach was there too. Billy Hart told me that after they all started playing Philly Joe Jones really started kicking some butt. Apparently, Billy and Al were going at it pretty hard, so Philly Joe turned it up a notch. I hope I'm paraphrasing Billy correctly. After it was over, Max Roach was talking on the mic while the musicians were getting up to leave the stage, and Max reached back with his right hand and started tapping on Billy Hart's small tom, as if to say to everyone, "You need to sit and listen to me." Billy and Al talked that day about developing their own sounds, and Al said "If, in five years I don't develop my own sound, I'm going to quit." After Al said what he said to me, and Billy told me that story, I realized that it was time to figure out who I am as a musician.

**MD**: We're both in our 50s, and I think we can agree that it takes a long time to develop a sound and an approach. It doesn't happen overnight.

**JF**: Absolutely. I remember when we went to see Roy Haynes and Max Roach it was so overwhelming, they were a power source that we all just gravitated to. We wanted to be Roy Haynes and Max Roach.

**MD**: So how is your new direction manifesting itself?

**JF**: It comes from figuring out who you are and who you want to be as a person first. I think back to the lessons and the conversations I had with Art Taylor and Alan Dawson. They talked about being themselves as human beings. Art Taylor was Art Taylor long before he got on the drums. When he got on the drums, that was just an extension of himself. He was the way he was long before he played on *Giant Steps* and played in the Red Garland Trio. So I started working on myself, what I wanted to do, and how I wanted to present myself on and off the stage.

I got to play with McCoy Tyner a lot in the last couple years of his life. I watched him on and off the stage, sitting in the dressing room, and I watched him speak. I thought about all the things he saw in his life. I started to try to get myself together. I came to understand that the drums are just an extension of myself. Instead of just trying to become a "better drummer," I needed to figure out who I was. A.T. was always talking about community, I wanted to be more like that.

**MD**: The more that I interview the great musicians, the more I realize that (most of the time) the personality and the person are inseparable from the musician and the playing. Knowing you in school, I can see the evolution.

**JF**: I'm glad, it took me a while to realize that it's about progress not perfection.

**MD**: So how is this manifesting itself drum wise?

**JF**: I used to wonder how Billy Higgins and Elvin Jones were able to smile like that when they played? How did those guys do it? I asked Billy why he smiled so much. He said because he was grateful to be free of some bad habits since the 60's. He was grateful to live and play happy, joyous, and free!

I would see pictures of myself playing with this grumpy face, the "I'm so serious, I'm a bad cat face." So I started practicing and learning how to smile when I played. When Billy Higgins would walk to the drums with that smile, the whole room would light up, even before he got to the drums. I started thinking, I'm grateful for my health, I'm grateful for my kids, and I'm grateful to be here playing with these people.

When I was making the video about Max Roach, trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater sent me a 30-minute video about his relationship with Max. It was a perfectly told story from beginning to end. There was no waffling, there was no meandering, no going off course. After listening to Cecil Bridgewater, I thanked him because his story was so inspiring and on point. He said it's easy to do when you are speaking in the *first person* and voicing your *own* feelings.

I was always trying to play the perfect Max Roach solo, but I wasn't playing "me," I was thinking I'm gonna execute this Max Roach thing… I wasn't playing in the first person. And if I did that, there's no way it could be "perfect."

**MD**: Being perfect is a whole lot of pressure to put on yourself.

**JF**: But if you are playing a gig with Pharoah Sanders, George Coleman, or Cedar Walton and they play a beautiful and perfect solo, then it's your turn to do the same thing; you think OK I gotta be perfect too! But Pharoah Sanders isn't thinking that he's gotta play through Coltrane, he's playing himself. Ironically, it was after hearing (trumpeter) Cecil Bridgewater talk about Max that I realized that I just gotta start playing myself and speaking/playing in the first person.

**MD**: I recently interviewed Terri Lyne Carrington, and she remarked about how the jazz language and the sense of rhythm has changed. When we talk about swing, there's a certain bounce, but for whatever reason that sense of bounce has started to feel dated. Are you feeling that same thing?

**JF**: For sure. When we were growing up, we wanted to play with Benny Golson, Johnny Griffin, Clifford Jordan, or Tommy Flanagan. These were the gigs that were out there, and if you could play, you could get on those gigs. Those were big time names, but that's not there anymore. With the younger generation there is a lot more influx of different types of music from musicians like Sullivan Fortner, Immanuel Wilkins, Robert Glasper, Kurt Rosenwinkel, and Brad Meldau. They borrow from every style of music and make it their own. Look at what Big Chief Donald Harrison is doing, he's combining all kinds of music and developing young talent. He's a real example to us all.

Playing with guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel at the Vanguard was a real eye opener. I had never heard him play; I had never even met him. That wasn't where my focus was. Then I played with him, he showed me some things that I didn't know existed. It was freeing. Kurt's music took the whole group to a fourth dimension. I also just recently played

Jimmy and Dena Katz

with Brad Meldau at the Vanguard, and it was a similar thing. These guys are so strong at telling their own stories, they obviously have their jazz influences, but they're doing it today with their own voice. That's what I want to do, that's what's happening now, you gotta change.

I've spent 37 years developing as a sideman. A sideman means wanting to make another person (the bandleader) sound good. You earn your power through that; you draw your power through the person you're playing with. As a young musician, you set your sights on who you want to play with, then you end up playing with them and your job is to make them sound good. But now in my 50s, as a band leader, I should be that power. That is a huge change for me, but that's what I choose to do. You must provide the responsibility, the energy, and you need to dare to be great. That's what Art Taylor, Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, and McCoy Tyner did, it was all right there for us to see. But that's a big change. My new direction is stepping up, being myself, and being a leader. To me, a lot of this is just the process of growing up.

Back to your question, playing swinging time? Yes, it's not that there's as much as it used to be, I'm not saying it's better or worse, that doesn't matter to me. But when music does swing, the people love it, people still respond to that. I just played "I'm Old Fashioned" with Emmet Cohen and people were just tapping their feet and smiling. People still love to swing and feel good.

**MD**: I've said this a lot about Dave Weckl. We were all fortunate to see him grow up behind the drums, but sometimes that can be a painful thing to watch and do. Watching someone develop can be awkward. You made your first record called *You Leave Me Breathless* with the legendary Junior Cook when you were 22, and we have seen you grow up behind the drums too, what has that been like?

**JF**: You and I were fortunate to be alive and around in the 80s, we are young enough to have seen THE cats, they were all still here. We tried to take everything we could from that experience, every night we tried to bring those experiences to our musical personalities.

It's amazing, today you can watch Roy Haynes play "Star Eyes" and people will be in tears. Then you can play "Star Eyes" the next night with the same guys, and everyone's talking and not listening. We are all still trying to figure that out. To hear Jimmy Cobb playing "My Shining Hour" with the same people you are playing with the next day… *what's the difference?* We're forced to do something to try and raise the level, but they set the tone. Now we're in that pursuit of greatness, that's only the way I can describe it. To be able to do that and have that feeling come off of the bandstand, that's what I'm after!

**MD**: We should set the tone.

**JF**: When we heard Jimmy Cobb playing with the Nat Adderley group (with Larry Willis, Walter Booker, and either Sonny Fortune or Vince Herring,) at Sweet Basil, the whole place was rockin'! The rhythm would smack you upside the head two blocks away. You could feel the beat, and once you got in the room, Jimmy Cobb had the whole room shaking. That's the unbelievable level that we are chasing. That was one of the best groups that I ever saw live.

**These guys are so strong at telling their own stories, they obviously have their jazz influences, but they're doing it today with their own voice. That's what I want to do, that's what's happening now, you gotta change.**

Another thing about growing up in that time, and understanding music better, is just how wide their beat was, and seeing how relaxed they were. I saw Billy Higgins play so many times. I asked Buster Williams what made Billy's ride cymbal beat so great, he said it was that Billy's beat was just *wider*. I never really thought of his playing as being wide but look back and listen. If I'm playing 1, 2, 3, 4, every beat has a certain length. But Billy's beat that was just a little bit *longer*, and it *never* wavered. When you hear a great basketball player like Magic Johnson talk, they talk about how the game slows down and they can see everything in slow motion, that's how those drummers played.

**MD**: You just brought up a great subject. Let's talk about different ride cymbal beats. Describe A.T.'s ride cymbal beat to me?

**JF**: When I heard *A.T.'s Delight* I got goosebumps! There was something about the record with Gene Ammons and A.T. that I liked above most everything else. On Jackie McClean *Jackie's Bag*, we all know Philly Joe was the greatest (he's on side one,) but if you listen to side two of *Jackie's Bag*, A.T. steals the show. When I went to William Paterson, my first year of lessons weren't so good. I didn't even know if A.T. was still around, but I remember thinking, I've got to find A.T. I found a musician's union book and I just I just went right down the list and called people's homes. I called Horace Silver, Walter Bishop, Walter Davis, a lot of people just people hung up on me. (Your favorite drummer,) Al Foster was very kind to me, and he led me to A.T. He lived up on Sugar Hill in Harlem.

**MD**: Al turned me onto A.T. on Kenny Dorham's *Inta Somethin',* Al loves A.T.

**JF**: And A.T. really loved JC Heard and his ride cymbal beat.

**MD**: You can hear the similarities between them on Gene Ammons record *Boss Tenor* with A.T. and Gene Ammons' *Nice an' Cool* with JC Heard.

**JF**: Philly Joe (kind of) showed A.T. how to incorporate the skip beat like on a shuffle. When A.T. was riding, it seemed like his head was riding with the cymbal, he'd be playing quarter notes with his head bobbing with the beat, that was stunning. A.T. had a serious "stroke" on the ride cymbal. Then when he'd go to the left cymbal, the transition from the right to the left would make him put his right shoulder up, then he'd take his left hand off the snare drum and just start cattin'. People would be screaming because it felt so good.

When A.T. talked about playing with Bird, he called it playing in "the big room." I don't know what that really meant, but there were only certain people that got in the big room. I think it was when your playing got to be where you wanted it to be. Then you set your sights on the next level and the only way to get there was to

get that wide beat. A.T. would talk about a wide beat with bassist Tommy Potter, making it so Bird could do all that stuff in between the beats while Art's right hand was maintaining a swing and his left hand was playing all those comping rhythms that he learned from Bud Powell. To me, A.T. was the king, I loved him more than anyone.

**MD**: Compare Jimmy Cobb's ride cymbal beat to A.T.'s?

**JF**: I was always practicing along to Jimmy Cobb on Miles' *Live at the Blackhawk* in high school. I thought, because of the sound of the record, that Jimmy was holding his stick tight or maybe pushing the stick into the cymbal.

**MD**: Dead-stroking with the right hand?

**JF**: Yeah, I was young and I developed a callus on my thumb from that. The first time I saw him play was with the Nat Adderley group and I walked up to Jimmy Cobb (like an idiot) and said, "Hello Mr. Cobb, look this callus on my thumb, I'm trying to play just like you," he just walked right by me and said, *"You're doing it wrong baby!"*

But back to your question, that's an interesting comparison. They were both relaxed and both got a massive quarter note feel on the ride. They both swung at the highest level. But if I had to compare the two—It seemed like A.T. had a little more of a lope in his ride and a little more skip in this playing, that skip is what he learned from Philly Joe.

William Brown

When you hear A.T., Billy Higgins, or Roy Haynes you can pinpoint something in their playing that you need to work on. But when you hear Jimmy Cobb, you can't pinpoint what you can do to get that, it's "un-gettable." That's a magical feeling!

**MD**: I love your "new approach," and your new record. But you did a record back in 2004 called *My Heroes*. On that record you ran down your list of drumming heroes and you dedicated a tune to each one. Let's go down that list and give me a lesson from each drummer. Max Roach?

**JF**: It's Max 100 birthday this year. When I was playing with McCoy Tyner, he told me that patient endurance attains all things. He was such a spiritual man. I'm from Worcester MA, and I have never had a chance to play in or around my hometown. But they just called me to headline the North Hampton Jazz Festival for Max Roach's birthday celebration. That came out of the blue and shocked me. That's what McCoy was talking about. I've waited 45 years to get a gig in my hometown, patient endurance *does* attain all things.

I first met Max at a masterclass at Amherst College in 1980. I walked in and he was playing the piano beautifully. He asked me what I was doing there. I said I want to learn how to play the drums from Max Roach. He asked me what I knew about Billy Strayhorn? I said, "I don't know anything about Billy Strayhorn," and he replied, "Then you don't know anything about the drums or Max Roach." One of the biggest lessons he talked about was to sit and listen. I used to love to listen to the way he spoke. He never said, "Papa Jo Jones." He would refer to him as Jonathan Livingston Jones, with so much admiration. He had so much love for other drummers and musicians. One of the biggest lessons in my life came from Max. Although he knew he was a bad cat, he always talked about other musicians, that's the big thing I learned from Max. He knew that everybody called him "The King," but when he talked, it was *never* about him. He talked about other drummers and musicians with such reverence.

I used to go see Max Roach at the Village Gate. I loved to see how he walked on the stage. A lot of people just walked up to the drums and sat or flopped down. Max took his time, looked at the whole room, and stood above the drums for a minute, like it was like a sacred place. He would stand there and take it all in before sitting down at the drums. That was the greatest thing I've ever seen.

After first meeting him, I was blessed to know him, he knew my family, so I was able to talk to him. The other thing I learned from him was that as drummers unfortunately we don't have to take the instrument out of our mouths and breathe like a singer or a horn player. Max said that you learned how to stop and breathe from having conversations. When you play it's call and response, someone plays something, and you play something that responds to that.

**MD**: Playing music is a conversation. How about Art Blakey?

**JF**: With "Blues March" and "Moanin'" I actually think people take Art Blakey for granted. The sound he created on the drum set was truly amazing. Listen to Lee Morgan *Tom Cat* or Blakey's *A Jazz Message* with Sonny Stitt and McCoy Tyner. His sound was remarkable. Art's dynamics were what dynamics are supposed to be. His highs were as high and loud as can be, and his lows were as quiet as could be. By listening to the records, you'd think (because his sound was so big) that he was really smacking the drums. There was all this energy coming from the drums, the sound was huge, and there he was, as calm as could be. He led the band with his dynamics, his breaks between melodies were so dynamic and would build so much tension— He would turn a song into a whole different tune, just by the way he played it.

**MD**: Is there anything else that you would like to say about Billy Higgins?

**JF**: Higgins told me once, and I still think about this today. Billy said that a lot of drummers play as if they are walking in a room and announcing, "Here I am!" Billy always wanted to be the drummer that walked in the room and started playing, and 10 minutes later the saxophone player would turn around and say, "Who's that playing drums?" Regrettably, I don't always do that, but I know what he's talking about.

Higgins' playing made everyone feel good. I saw him a lot with Cedar Walton at Bradley's, where you had to play kind of quietly. One-time Max Roach was sitting next to me. When Billy Higgins saw a musician walk in, he would sit up a little taller. But when Max Roach walked in, Billy looked like Kareem Abdul Jabbar he was sitting so tall. He took a solo and played right at Max. As he played, Max would say "Baby Dodds," and Billy would play like Baby Dodds. Then he would say "Sid Catlett" and Billy would play like him, this went on and on. That night the trio played "A Night in Tunisia" and Billy "just" played these super swinging eighth notes on the floor tom on the break, and the place went crazy! It was the greatest thing I've ever heard. Max and Billy sat and talked about learning to phrase by listening to Charlie Parker. Max talked about Bird telling him to make the beat wider. The brotherhood and love they had, that's what I want to do, be myself and play what's happening today.

**A sideman means wanting to make another person (the bandleader) sound good.**

One time when I was playing with George Coleman and Harold Mabern, George asked me if I *wanted some butter with those rolls?* Everybody started laughing because I didn't know what that meant. Later I learned that George didn't like when people rolled at the top of every chorus, saying, "I know where one is! Swing through it!" Billy Higgins told me that I needed more "emit." That's time spelled backwards, that was the Max Roach way of saying it. I started listening closer to the records. I noticed that when Billy was playing, he would often swing straight through the top, so the momentum just kept going up, up, and up… Then after 10 choruses of building that tension, Billy might finally play a crash with a little fill creating this amazing release! You can hear that on a Hank Mobley record called *Straight No Filter,* they play "Soft Impressions," and they double the bridge. McCoy Tyner is on fire and Billy's playing time, but not once does Billy fill at the top of the chorus. THAT'S what's different from today, today there's a fill on every two measures whether you like it or not.

**MD**: You play a killer brush solo on *My Heroes* in tribute to Alan Dawson. Did you study with Alan Dawson?

**JF**: I sure did, for two years. I first heard Tony Williams on Miles Davis' *Live in Tokyo* and it changed my life. That's the great thing about records and liner notes, you hear a record, and it leads you to other guys on other records. I bought that record because I had bought Weather Report *Live in Tokyo* with Eric Gravatt and I loved it. Then I bought Coltrane *In Tokyo* with Elvin.

**MD**: That's a great journey.

**JF**: I feel bad that kids can't go into a record store and look through the records and read liner notes. Those were the best days. But I heard Tony and I found out that he studied with Alan and that Alan was still alive. My father is a trumpeter and a high school band director, and he would drive me out to Alan's every two weeks for two years. I recently went back to his house. John Ramsay lives there now, and I wouldn't have recognized it. You used to go to the side door and go downstairs to the basement. Then Alan would come out of the bathroom with lotion on his hands. He was giving 10 lessons a day seven days a week, and I can still smell his hand cream. You'd sit knee to knee with the pad between you and you'd have to do the two rudiments that he gave you for that week. I always remember him telling me to slow down and play full strokes, that was a huge lesson. Another thing that made an impression on me was that Alan owned a house. Even in 8th grade, I remember thinking that's kind of cool. That's a dream of mine to have a house and teach like Alan did in his basement. His lessons were very consistent, there was nothing personal, it wasn't that you have to play this way, he wasn't trying to change your style, it was just straight information. He was so clear with his strokes, he made you care about every stroke that you were playing. Whether you were doing a flam, a paradiddle, or a five-stroke roll, you executed every stroke with care.

**Still today, I want a little Alan Dawson in every note that I play.**

Still today, I want a little Alan Dawson in every note that I play. These drummers that we love, they play themselves, but they also have all these other influences in them, drummers from the past. It's a family and you feel that. There's drummers that that don't have that, and drummers that do. When Billy Hart plays you know that he loves all these other drummers, and it comes out in his playing.

**MD**: It's the roots of the drumming tree. Those roots are what makes a tree unshakable, and the deeper the roots,

the more steadfast the tree.

**JF**: Amen. If you have roots in Max Roach, Alan Dawson, and Art Blakey—You might not be "the best," but you aren't going to get knocked down.

**MD**: What does the word "touch" mean to you, and how have you worked on yours?

**JF**: When you said "touch," there were two images that came to mind. The first was the way that Art Taylor's stick hit the ride cymbal, the sound he got with his left hand on the snare drum, and the sound he got from the bass drum. That's touch. When A.T. sat down and just hit the ride cymbal, there was no stress, no forcing, and no effort. It was just a natural stroke. He just touched the ride with the stick. The other image would be Billy Higgins playing the ride cymbal, it was the sound of crystals, beautiful gems shimmering, crystals dropping.

There's two Roy Haynes images that come with the word touch. When I saw Roy Haynes the first time in 1988, he played a solo on "Un Poco Loco," I was in disbelief in the sound that he was creating with the drums. Years later, I heard him play "The Night has 1,000 Eyes" with Kenny Garrett, that song switches between Latin and swing through the entire song. Kenny Garrett took like 30 choruses, and Roy never went to Latin with a fill or to swing with a crash. He just transitioned from Latin to swing without fills or crashes, he just "got there," it was so beautiful and smooth, that's musical touch. You or I would have been filling between each section. And after 10 courses, we'd eventually start repeating ourseves, not Roy Haynes! When I talked to him all he did was talk about Sarah Vaughan, phrasing, rhythm, and touch. He said he developed his touch by playing with Sarah Vaughan. He talked about playing brushes with Sarah and learning how she was phrasing. You want to hear touch, listen to Roy's playing on Sarah Vaughan *Live at Mr. Kelly's.*

When I studied with Arthur Taylor the first two lessons were listening to Sarah Vaughan, we didn't even get to the drums. Speaking of touch, how about the touch of Jimmy Young on the piano with Sarah? When you hear a musical touch like that it makes you play the drums better. Once I was in the back room at The Vanguard and Roy Haynes literally put his finger on the drum and the sound went through the room. That makes you really realize how dynamic the drums can be.

**MD**: You played a tune for Buddy Rich on My Heroes, what does Buddy mean to you?

**JF**: When I grew up in South Hadley, my four brothers were always playing music. My oldest brother David is a drummer, and all he listened to was Buddy Rich, Count Basie, and he watched *Soul Train* with The OJ's and Earth, Wind, & Fire. The middle room was my brother James, he listened to the record with Sonny Stitt, Sonny Rollins, and Dizzy Gillespie. He transcribed everything from that record. My brother John was a trombone player and listening to Coltrane and JJ Johnson. I had my own little 52nd St. in our house. When my brother would go to school, he would say don't touch my drums. As soon as he was out of sight, I would leap on the drums and play along to Buddy Rich "West Side Story" and Count Basie "April in Paris" (with Sonny Payne.) Every time I heard those records, I felt like I was at a party. I couldn't believe Buddy's power when he played the big solo. People to try to "thumbs down" Buddy—sorry, he was the greatest. I don't know if it's jealousy or what. He was really good buddies with the Philly Joe Jones and Jimmy Cobb.

**MD**: When he was surrounded by his musical peers like Lester Young or Charlie Parker, he was a different cat.

**JF**: When I was making the list of drummers for that record, Harold Mabern looked at the list and said you better put Buddy Rich on there, because he's the greatest.

**MD**: Talk about Elvin.

**JF**: That was one guy that I never really got close to. Even though he was the nicest guy, but when I saw him, it was just too overwhelming for me. There was too much power there, after he played, I was speechless, I would just walk away not believing what I just saw. Talk about a wide beat and quarter notes. Bassist Gerald Cannon (who played with Elvin) told me that one of the only things Elvin told him was to respect the width of the

Jimmy and Dena Katz

quarter note. Even when he would just be chopping wood on two and four, or just playing straight up swing with his quarter notes. That's how they separate themselves from the rest.

If you listen to Elvin on McCoy Tyner's "Passion Dance" you or I would play 10 times more than Elvin Jones is actually playing on that tune. There's not a fill on every bar. When we (mortals) try to play like Elvin it seems to take us 10 more notes to try to do what he's doing. He's playing four strokes but it's taking us 20 strokes, his hands actually weren't moving that fast. But his beat was just so wide.

**MD**: How does one widen their own beat?

**JF**: First of all, you gotta be aware of it, and every time you play you gotta think that I've got to make the beat wider. You gotta breathe more and you've got to relax. You can't force things; you have to let the music come to you. I'm lucky, I have experienced examples of this while playing with Ron Carter and Bob Cranshaw. When you play with bass players like that you learn a lot. Playing with Ron showed me that sometimes I actually have to take a breath between four and one. I found that I was already on one while he's still in the middle of his "thing." I would have to think 1, 2, 3, 4, breathe, 1. With Bob when the music was exciting, I could feel myself raising the tempo. Then Bob would be there like a Mack truck, and I'd breathe and slow down and relax. It's just being aware of it, but everyone has to be aware of it. Only a special few have "that." It does seem like a lot of the guys that have "that," have played with Bird, because you had to have that to play with Bird. Max, Roy Haynes, Buddy, AT, Blakey—they all played with Bird, that's the common denominator. Someone said that Elvin asked Bird about phrasing and Bird said that he thought about two measures at a time. You could feel Elvin thinking eight beats at a time. If you're thinking one measure at a time, you're trying to fit things in there. But when Elvin was thinking eight beats at a time, he didn't have to put the bass drum exactly on one. It *could* be there, but it didn't *have* to be. Elvin is beyond me, you go back to the JJ Johnson records and especially the brush playing on Tommy Flanagan Overseas, and you can really hear where Elvin came from.

**MD**: You played a solo for Baby Dodds, tell me about that?

**JF**: Through playing in New Orleans, with Wynton Marsalis, and conversations with Herlin Riley, I've learned a lot. Obviously, I didn't know Baby Dodds. But I spent a good deal of time talking to Vernell Fournier about Baby Dodds. The only thing we really have on Baby Dodds is the records and that video of him talking drums and playing the shimmy. I would ask Vernell Fournier about the sound that he was getting out of his press rolls and his brushes. He answered me by talking a lot about Baby Dodds. Once again, I was sitting there asking a drummer about something, and he answered me by talking about another drummer, just like Max, it's never about you. My solo was as much about my love for Vernell as it was about Baby Dodds.

**MD**: I really think the shimmy is the predecessor of the jazz ride cymbal pattern, that's where it came from.

**JF**: You might be on to something, I'll have to think about that. The five-stroke roll is basically the shimmy, but when you go back and hear Baby Dodds doing it, it's like two different worlds. He plays it and it sounds like butter, when we play it, it has a harsher military sound. The shimmy is how they used to swing back in the day, there was no ride cymbal yet, and the king of that was Baby Dodds.

**MD**: Talk to me about the national treasure that is Roy Haynes.

**JF**: If there's anything I believe in, it's that there's Roy Haynes, and there's the rest of us, period! I can tell you exactly what I learned from Roy *and* A.T. Art believed in minding your own business and surrounding yourself with good people. He would tell you that if you have the will and the desire, and you do the hard work, you'll get stuff done and achieve greatness.

When I got my first "big gig" playing with Benny Golson at Sweet Basil, Betty Carter, Ray Bryant, Clifford Jordan, George Coleman, all these superstars came to the club. I was happy I just made it through the week. On the last night, this guy comes in wearing a cowboy hat, beautiful glasses, a $10,000 belt, and he's staring right at the drums, it's Roy Haynes. Benny Golson leans in and says, "Let's play 'Stablemates' and at the end we'll play a duo just sax and drums. And by the way, that's Roy Haynes, so play everything you know."

There were some young drummers there that week that wanted that gig, and they let it be known. But after the last night, Benny calls me and says, "Roy Haynes thought you were a *bad cat*. Roy said he knew it by the way I sat down at the drums and played a quarter note with my right hand and right foot at the same time. He said he knew that I could play from the way the sound of the bass drum and the ride cymbal hit together." That showed me everything that you would ever want to know about geniuses like Roy. They want you to sound good, they wanna come out and support, and they want to feel good. They're not up there saying this guy can't do that, and that guy can't do this. They are positive. The next week I subbed for Kenny Washington for one night with Johnny Griffin at the Vanguard. Roy came in again and we had the longest chat, he was just so kind.

A.T. and I were watching trumpeter Roy Hargrove once, and a drummer came up and said that he thought the drummer wasn't playing well, and that he should be up there playing. A.T. just told him to get the hell out of here and mind your own business, we're here to have fun. A.T. just shot this guy down and said to me, "I've met a million people like that in my life, all they want to do is talk bad about someone else, and you don't know *any* of their names, and you *never* will. A.T., Jimmy Cobb, and Roy Haynes would all tell you, "Take care of the drums and the drums will take care of you. Mind your own business, your business is the drums."

**MD**: You have played on dozens of records, what are the ones that you

**Elvin is beyond me, you go back to the JJ Johnson records and especially the brush playing on Tommy Flanagan Overseas, and you can really hear where Elvin came from.**

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would point people to as your favorites?
**JF**: I love *The House of Tribes* with Wynton Marsalis. He told me that he hired me for that because a couple people in his camp were saying that I "couldn't" play. Because of that, he knew I *could* play, and that's why he hired me. A big one for me was *Beautiful Friendship* with Cedar Walton. To have him arrange all those tunes for me, and to have him on the cover, he's never done that for anybody. To have a giant like Wynton on my record *A Time To Swing* meant a lot to me. I did a record with Curtis Fuller and Benny Golson, and to play with those two on a record playing Blues After Dark was big. Then there is Eric Alexander's *Nightlife in Japan* with Ron Carter playing bass. Eric, Harold and I have made a lot of records together, and Eric could get anyone, but he's been kind enough to keep using me. Pharoah Sanders *The Creator Has a Master Plan* is one that's very important to me, as is Cedar Walton's *One Flight Down*. Of course, my first record, Junior Cook's *You Leave Me Breathless* was something to remember.
**MD**: What cymbals are you using now?
**JF**: I have a nice old 22" K, an older 18" A that is a nice Louis Hayes-Kenny Washington type of cymbal, and a nice set of 13" A hi-hats that Jesse Simpson refurbished. Jimmy Lovelace played 13" hats, and I have always liked them.

Jimmy Lovelace was one of the greatest drummers ever. We used to live together and play double drums, and my hands were always moving twice as fast as his, but he sounded better. He was as smooth as glass, a great drummer. His touch would make one stroke sound like two notes, that's touch.

I like playing bright cymbals, and I play them with 2B nylon tip sticks. Ray Appleton told me one time that my cymbals were too washy and that I should play with nylon tips, so I tried it and I've never gone back. Back then the only jazz drummers using nylon tips were Billy Higgins, Kenny Washington, Louis Hayes, and Mickey Roker. Nylon tips are clear, and they have a point, it's like Mickey's sound on *Speak Like a Child*, clear and sparkling.
**MD**: You just mentioned Louis Hayes.
**JF**: He lives five minutes away from me, and it's nice to know he's there. Talk about hands and touch on a ride cymbal— His pad practice is legendary. The way he played the hi-hats on "Del Sasser" with Cannonball Adderley is genius. The stuff he played on Barry Harris *Live at the Jazz Workshop*, Joe Henderson *The Kicker*, Horace Silver's *Finger Poppin',* and with Cannonball on *Live in San Francisco*, that's some of the greatest drumming ever. I have a pair of Lou Hayes sticks on my kitchen table, and I play them every morning.
**MD**: Who are some of the young drummers that you are paying attention to?
**JF**: There are so many younger drummers it's hard to keep up, and I don't know how young they are anymore. But guys like Kyle Poole, Evan Sherman, Alan Menard, Mark Whitfield Jr., and Kush Abadey are cooking. I still think of my peers like Eric McPherson, Bill Stewart, Jonathan Blake, and Nasheet Waits as *young*.
**MD**: When you hear your new record, do you think you sound different?
**JF**: I'm getting there. I'm pushing and not playing any pre-conceived ideas. When you play with Kurt Rosenwinkel or Brad Meldau, they are playing stuff that you've never heard before, so you can't rely on older vocabulary. You have to let go, be present, trust them, and go with them. No one wants to be out on an island alone.

Whatever the musical conditions are on the bandstand, you have to power up for every gig. I try to go back and remember what all these great musicians have said to me along the way. Barry Harris sent me a video before he passed away saying, "No matter the cost, be the boss! Be the boss, no matter the cost." Now there's the responsibility of passing along what everyone has taught me. It's an obligation that I take seriously, and I am trying do it all the time. Thankfully, social media has allowed me to do just that. I can share all my lessons, love of music, and the moments I had with the masters like A.T. Max, Billy, Jimmy Cobb, Alan Dawson, Art Blakey, Leroy Williams, and Jimmy Lovelace whenever I want to. I want to continue to live happy, joyous, and free. And to play that way, just like Billy Higgins told me. Follow Joe on Instagram **@joefarnsworthdrums**

William Brown

**Check out Joe's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com**

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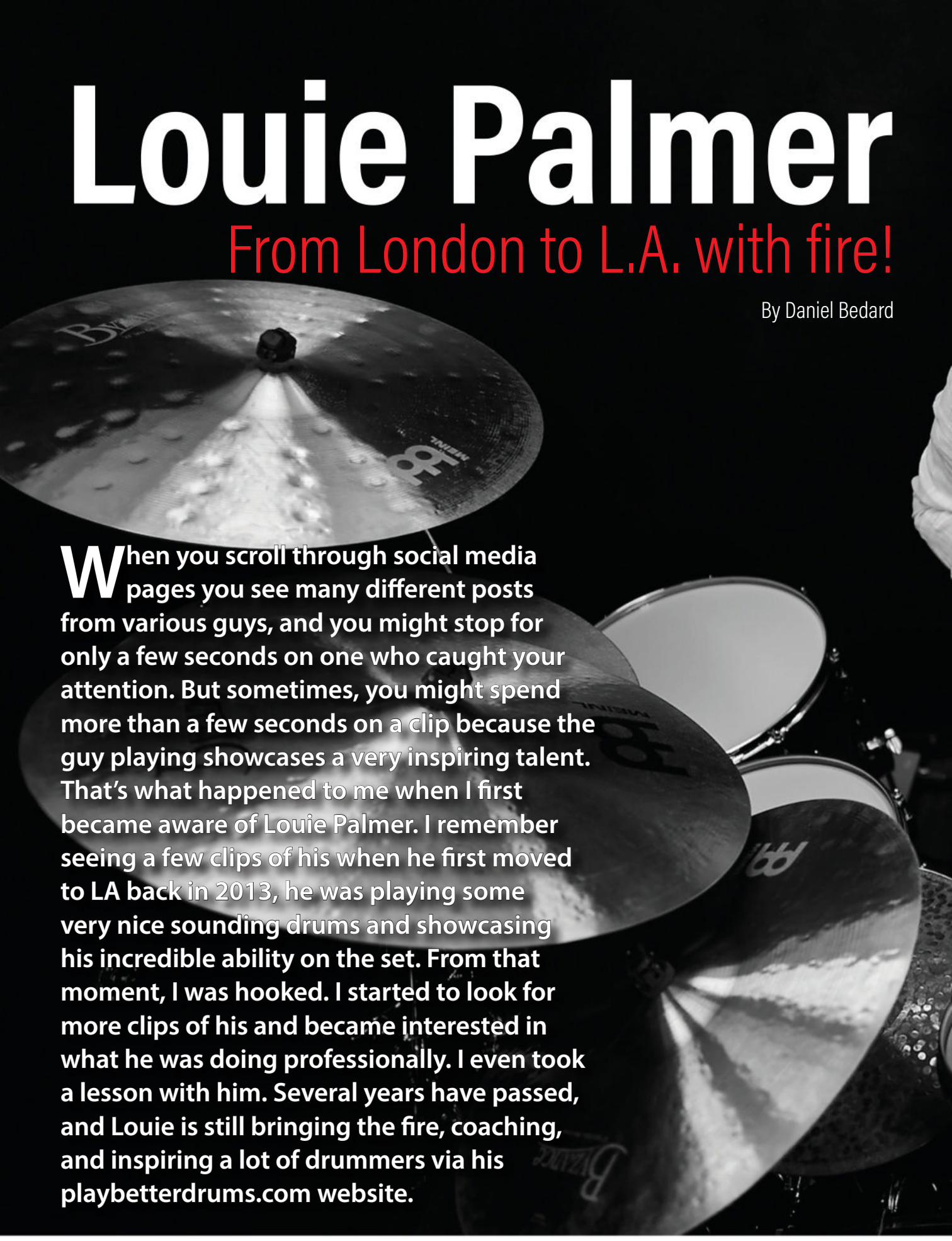
# Louie Palmer

## From London to L.A. with fire!

By Daniel Bedard



**When you scroll through social media pages you see many different posts from various guys, and you might stop for only a few seconds on one who caught your attention. But sometimes, you might spend more than a few seconds on a clip because the guy playing showcases a very inspiring talent. That's what happened to me when I first became aware of Louie Palmer. I remember seeing a few clips of his when he first moved to LA back in 2013, he was playing some very nice sounding drums and showcasing his incredible ability on the set. From that moment, I was hooked. I started to look for more clips of his and became interested in what he was doing professionally. I even took a lesson with him. Several years have passed, and Louie is still bringing the fire, coaching, and inspiring a lot of drummers via his playbetterdrums.com website.**

Marcus Wolf

**MD**: Can you tell us about how you got started with drumming?
**LP**: I'm from south of London in the suburbs, the county is called Surrey which is about 40 minutes from London. My dad was an excellent and professional drummer, he played a lot of jazz and was a beautiful brush player. I was lucky to have a musical parent who introduced me to the drums. I remember being maybe five or six years old and having a toy plastic saxophone that came with a brochure with pictures of other instruments. I started pointing at the drums saying I wanted to have the little plastic toy drum kit. My dad had a little kit that he set up for me, it was a little black Beverly kit, they were a division of Premier drums, I think. I had a 20" bass drum with a 12" and 14" toms and that was the beginning for me. My dad taught me how to play and I had some lessons at school when I was seven or eight. After that, I went to high school and had lessons with a guy called Peter Precious who taught me how to read and showed me a lot of the basics including working on rudiments. We also did the grade system here in England where you would do grade 1-2-3, then there would be a period of study and an exam where you would pass or fail. The grade system in the UK was a way to rank where you were on your instrument.
**MD**: I have heard of that system for instruments like violin and piano but never for drumming.
**LP**: It was fairly new when I did it. Eventually they expanded it to different types because the grade system that I did was "quite classical," then they branched out to rock versions and other types of music.
**MD**: Was this when you were young and going into your teenage years?
**LP**: Yes, I had lessons at school from around 12 to 16 years old. My dad continued to teach me and we would play at home. I was lucky that we were living in a detached house, and we had a room for the drums. We had two kits set up and we would play together.
**MD**: What kind of stuff were you doing back then? Were you playing with friends and bands?
**LP**: This is another way that I was very lucky. Around 11 years old, I joined a local youth concert band with brass and all. The local town had a band called the Sutton Youth Concert Band.
**MD**: And that was not school related?
**LP**: No, that was outside of school. That was a local thing. With that I was playing classical music, orchestral things, snare drum, reading, and following a conductor. I also played a little bit of marimba and tympani. Then from the age of 12 to 17 years old, I did a different orchestra and big band called the Merton Youth Concert Band and the Merton Youth Jazz Orchestra, Those were two separate alternating bands, one Wednesday would be the concert band and the next one would be the jazz orchestra. It was the best thing ever. I was with kids from all around. I did the classical stuff with the concert band and the big band thing with the jazz orchestra. We got to travel, we did mini tours for a couple of years, we went to Italy, Norway and more. It was just a great learning experience because I was having lessons with my dad at home and playing with ensembles in town. How many kids, especially drummers, get to go and learn how to read, follow a conductor, and play classical music? I remember experiences playing snare drum or drum kit in an orchestra in this big gymnasium and when you'd make a mistake, and the conductor would stop the band and he point at you in a room of 40 kids. Everyone would turn around and look at you because you made a mistake, or you weren't following the conductor. Those were great experiences. I was doing all this drum stuff, checking out fusion drummers, and then going to rehearsal and switching into music mode, because a lot of the stuff I was interested in didn't apply

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because you had to do the drummer's job.

That was up until I was around 17 years old, then when I turned 18, I started studying with Thomas Lang. He lived in London back then, I met him at a drum clinic he was doing in London. I don't think I'd ever seen a drummer play like that before, him and Virgil were the only guys really to play all that incredible stuff. I saw him play and just went up to him at the end and asked him if he was teaching and he said yes. I studied with him for about two years, but we only did maybe 8 lessons. It was spread throughout the year, every few months I'd go for a lesson. Meanwhile, from the age of 12 to 18, I was gigging too because I met so many musicians through these youth bands. There was a guy named Pablo Mendelssohn and I would go out and play little jazz gigs. So I was gigging throughout this period too. I also went to the Berklee College of Music very briefly. When I was 15 years old, I went to Ireland to audition for Berklee because they would do the world scholarship tour and the closest place they came to was Ireland. So I went there, did the audition, got a scholarship and attended when I was 18. I went to Berklee in 2004 but only for a few months. I did one semester there and just didn't like it. It was a weird experience.

**MD**: What didn't you like about it?

**LP**: It was a mismatch of expectations and reality and being 18. I had a place to practice at home, I was gigging, I was studying with Thomas, at home it was 100% drumming and music all day long. Then I got to Berklee and it was a very different experience. There were 3000 students and over half of them were guitarists and drummers so there was maybe a thousand drummers and there were 18 practice rooms. A lot of the gear was broken, you had to put your name down and wait for hours to practice. It was just a very weird experience. I probably should have stayed and studied something specific like composition or music theory, something outside of drumming. But I was so desperate to play, and I just didn't get to. It was costing my parents thousands of dollars, and I was away from home where I was already gigging and had a great teacher, so I went back home. That was a brief experience but I met some interesting people. I studied briefly with Mike Mangini and that was interesting. Then, I came back to London, carried on and kept on studying with Thomas a little bit.

**MD**: What kind of stuff were you working on with Thomas Lang?

**LP**: All our lessons were on pads and V-Drums because he had a room at the back of his house which was a drum room, but he never set up acoustic drums. He had a load of V-Drums, pads, and practice kits, so we would do a lot of technique stuff. Up until I was 18 years old, I never really had proper technique lessons, my dad taught me basics (of course.) I play traditional grip, because he played it. But I really hadn't had anyone teach me any "high end technique." Thomas really completely changed everything with my grip, and he taught me proper technique. Everyone has different techniques and different versions of things, but I thought he was amazing. Everyone used to rave about his feet, but I always used to think he had the most beautiful hand technique, and he still does. He can do all that crazy stuff like push pull techniques and all those great techniques, but I just always thought he had beautiful hands. So we did a lot of pad stuff, hand stuff, foot stuff and independence, a lot of his core systems he teaches. We got into his matrix system where you play rudiments with your feet and rudiments with your hands on top and you cycle through different things. You play paradiddles with your feet, and you go through all the different combinations of orchestrating things on the drums with your hands.

> Thomas Lang really completely changed everything with my grip, and he taught me proper technique.

That was in combination with having lessons with Dave Weckl around the same time and also studying jazz. Obviously, Thomas is not a jazz drummer, although is knowledge is pretty extensive. It was interesting because he is known for playing in a certain way and style of music, but we covered a little bit of Afro-Cuban things and some jazz. His knowledge is vaster than what people think.

**MD**: How did the lessons with Dave Weckl come about?

**LP**: Dave used to do weeklong gigs at Ronnie Scott's with his band and I would go every year. I was such a super fan of his and I would email him and just ask for lessons. He was always very nice to me, he always replied. I went to the shows, trying to follow up and talk to him, and it wouldn't happen, or he'd say he was too busy. Eventually it worked out in 2004. I went to Ronnie Scott's for a lesson during the daytime. Dave's drums were set up on stage and we did a lot of pad stuff. I had to play on his kit, and I actually remember playing ok. I remember saying to him, "I'm just a bit nervous. Imagine if Buddy Rich said to you, sit down and play (because Buddy was his favorite drummer.)" It was a crazy experience, it was a good two hour lesson and we kept in touch over the years. I have had three lessons with him over the years.

**MD**: Were your lessons always in London?

**LP**: The next one was in 2007 in London, and it was a very good one. I rented a rehearsal space and I packed two drum kits into my car because I wanted us to play together. So I packed the kits, drove to London, paid for his taxi, and then went to this place in London and setup the kits and we did the lesson. That was great! Then we hung out, went for dinner afterwards, he was really cool to me. The third lesson was in Los Angeles at his place around 2014.

**MD**: You have studied with a few very famous guys. How were the lessons with Peter Erskine and Virgil Donati?

**LP**: Virgil's was in 2005, I went to the NAMM show, I emailed him a few times and then we arranged a lesson, I went to his studio and that was a great experience. He had me sit down at the drums and play to a click really slowly. He just said "play." That's hard to do for anybody but more so when you're nervous and playing someone else's drums.

That was another example of how foundational things are so incredibly strong with these guys, because after I played, he sat down and played at

the same tempo, and it was incredibly solid. We all know Virgil for his chops and his amazing technique but his time is incredible.

The lesson with Peter was in LA in 2011. I moved to LA in 2013, so in 2011 and 2012, I went in preparation to find a place to live. I went to Peter's house, and he had me play brushes. He had a piano with an automatic device that plays songs. I played brushes on a standard and he recorded it. We listened back, and he would hit pause and ask me, "Why did you play that?" I was playing some extra little fills here and there which (upon listening,) we both realized were pointless. So we went through why I was playing certain things. That was a great lesson.

I also had a lesson with Will Kennedy in 2005. He had a studio opposite to Virgil's place. He's an amazing drummer, one of my absolute favorites. He has a curriculum that he would go through, he'd do some play-along's of the Yellowjackets and some groove ideas. I asked about his feel and groove because his pocket is amazing. We talked about things like tuning and pulling sound out of the drums and how important that is. He also said that nothing ahead ever is funky, so to always be thinking slightly behind the beat, that's what's funky in his opinion. Then we traded, he had two kits setup and that was just the most fun thing. We played a groove, and we would trade four's back and forth. It was fun to do that with one of your heroes. You're hearing the vocabulary that you know so well, right next to you.

When I was a teenager, I also had lessons with Mark Mondesir. He's an amazing musician and he was very supportive; I've had three or four lessons with him over the years. The lessons were very interesting, I was about 15 or 16 years old. He's a very conceptual guy and I remember a lot of it was going over my head because I just wasn't good enough or experienced enough with music to understand. He was talking about the big picture things, and he didn't really have any advice on technique or independence or anything like that, it was all very conceptual. We would play together, and he would talk about playing jazz. I remember at the time; I was very much into Louie Bellson and Buddy Rich. But my interpretation of that, at 15, was very square. Mark was the first guy that talked to me in conceptual ways about music, but his playing was very loose and very organic. When I would play swing time, it was very square and he introduced me to a different way of playing, different jazz records to listen to. He nudged me into a different direction which at the time was very helpful.

...after I played, he sat down and played at the same tempo, and it was incredibly solid. We all know Virgil for his chops and his amazing technique but his time is incredible.

**MD**: What kind of gigs were you doing back in your early years?

**LP**: Through my teenage years, I was doing jazz gigs and earning a little bit of money on the side. When I was 18, I left school and started teaching. I started to build my teaching skills from that early age actually and having lessons with many different people helped because everyone teaches differently. So I was teaching and gigging to earn a living, it was a mixture of the two. I played in a bunch of wedding bands, and had a lot of gigs around London in restaurants and bars. I was also playing at the 606 and at Ronnie Scott's in London, I did a lot of singer-songwriter things, I made records at Rockfield Studios in Wales, which is a very famous studio where Queen recorded their albums. I was playing a real mixture of styles too, it wasn't just jazz and fusion, there was a lot of rock and vanity projects too. People would hire a band to make a record and do gigs and through different studio engineers that I knew, I would be recommended to do things. I was just playing all over London and the UK.

**MD**: At some point, you decided to make the move to LA.

**LP**: It was always my dream to live in America, 99% of the drummers, musicians, and music that I liked was American. I also went on vacations as a kid with my parents, I wanted to be surrounded by American culture and music. In 2004, Berklee was part of that. I thought that maybe if I went to Berklee and studied, it would be a way to stay and build my life in America, but that didn't work out. In 2011, I went to Canada to do some gigs with an incredible singer Ola Onabule. Then I flew down to LA to see some friends, and I got to see Dave Weckl play, I even got to drum tech for him while he was playing at Catalina's in LA with Chuck Loeb. So I got to drum tech for him and sit right behind his drums for the shows, I'll never forget that, it was crazy and so much fun. I had been there a few times but that was the moment where I decided "Ok, I'm going to do it." I spent 2012 preparing and saving some money, and in January 2013 I moved to LA. I had some friends here like Janek Gwizdala who's a phenomenal bass player, he's been a friend for a long time, and we played together a bunch in London when he would come in town. I was tired of London and when I moved, I also considered New York but it was too similar to London, a grind and an expensive city to live in. LA is so spread out and so different.

**MD**: How did you manage to make it work? It must be hard at first to build your network.

**LP**: Yes, I took a huge risk, I knew it would be difficult. It was tough at the beginning, even though you have friends who recommend you and tell people about you, it doesn't mean that you land, hit the city, and start geting gigs. So I saved

## Louie's Top 5 Favorite Recordings:

Yellowjackets - *Club Nocturne* (Will Kennedy)
Tower Of Power - *Soul Vaccination Live* (David Garibaldi)
Mike Stern - *Voices* (Vinnie Colaiuta & Dennis Chambers)
Roy Hargrove & the RH Factor - *Hard Groove* (Willie Jones III & Jason Thomas)
Chick Corea Electric Band - *Inside Out* (Dave Weckl)

money, knowing that there was going to be a long period where I wouldn't be gigging. But I did some work and things started to happen. However, I must admit that it was slow. On the other hand, I had done so many years of my gigging sideman thing in my twenties. I never wanted to be that musician, the guy who was the around town guy, doing restaurants, bars, weddings, and all sorts of stuff. Although, there's nothing wrong with that and I still do that. You *can* get big gigs from that because all sorts of musicians are coming in and out of that world. You can meet someone on a wedding gig that recommends you for a huge arena tour gig. But all the people I looked up to were artists in their own right, doing their own music and something unique to them and trying to exit from that world. Of course, I had to earn money, that's always an issue. So I decided to get a studio here because in London you can't do that and in New York it's too expensive and they just don't exist. In LA, there are studios and lockout buildings everywhere, so I got my own studio and I gradually built it with equipment, and I started my lesson site in 2014.

I was here for a year, and I saw my friend Janek who was one of the first guys to do the online lessons thing and he had a very successful website doing bass lessons. He built a following and he had branches of podcasts, online lessons, a book, and he would tour and sell records. He was a good example of how someone had built this little world for themselves and didn't have to rely on other people for their weekly gigs. I was hanging out with Janek, and his life was different to most musicians. He would tour and play with musicians like Mike Stern, but his home life in LA was different. We would hang out together on the tennis courts or the golf courses and I thought there's something here that seems pretty good, so I set up my own drum website using his site as a model. I tried to use Instagram, Facebook, and making videos as a way to build my audience. That's when my life changed in terms of how much I was relying on getting gigs. I'm not a super sociable person that likes hanging out until three in the morning at gigs. I was already aware of that fact so that makes it harder to get gigs when you move to a new town.

**MD**: This brings us to how "Play Better Drums" came about?

**LP**: That aligns with the rise of social media, the music business was already in a massive decline in early 2010's. I spent a year here and I wasn't earning enough money to survive so I realized that I had to diversify because it's only going to get worse, the music business was just declining so much. It was a necessity; I was looking at some other people who did it and thinking that it was a good idea. I was thinking that I had to build a business rather than just waiting to be hired for a gig. So I started it and I bought some cameras. I had been teaching a lot in my twenties but learning to teach on camera, thinking about building a curriculum, learning about lights, and video editing was just all new to me, I just did it as I went along. Some of the early videos are pretty basic, but I guess that's the only way to do it, you have to jump in and start learning.

**MD**: Were you doing all of that yourself?

**LP**: Pretty much, yes. Janek was helping because he had already done that. He would give me advice on website building, but I pretty much did it on my own. I had the idea and the concept because I had seen someone else's

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website, but I had to do all the website design on my own. I'm a drummer, I knew nothing about marketing, so yes, it was all on my own. The interesting thing is that I used to get very frustrated, we're talking about hundreds of hours sitting behind a computer, building websites, and doing that stuff. It gets very frustrating and you end up thinking, "Screw it! I'm just going to hire someone, I want to pay someone else to do this." But Janek was always telling me, "That's the wrong thing to do, you need to learn to do everything yourself because then, you're in control of everything." At the time, I thought this is a terrible idea, but it was actually the best thing to do. You're trying to get a school up and running but you end up building all these other skills and once you get good at these things, someone else might ask you to build a website and you suddenly have this other skill to offer.

The pandemic is a good example of how so many musicians were screwed. They had no other skills in terms of being able to do all the things that they suddenly needed to do. Everyone was doing Skype and Zoom lessons, but no one had any idea how to do any marketing and no one had a home studio setup. No one knew how to record their drums, no one took any care about recording and their sound. All these things are very important. I remember Weckl saying, "You've got to learn to not only be a drummer, but you've also got to build your own little universe."

**MD**: Nowadays, if somebody subscribes to Play Better Drums how does it work? Do you pay a monthly or yearly fee?

**LP**: There's a few different options, there's monthly, six months, and yearly memberships. There's also a lifetime membership. The monthly membership is the most popular, it gives you access to hundreds of videos. It's all my playing and teaching experience, the lessons I had with all these great drummers and all the information combined in the school. It's turned into a really great encyclopedia of all sorts of things from grooves to fills to vocabulary to hand technique and foot technique. I don't think there's actually anyone else doing this. There are lesson websites of course but a lot of them focus on beginners and early to intermediate playing. The only other guy I can think of that is doing this is Cliff Almond. He's an incredible world class player and he has an online lesson site. Of course, Dave Weckl and Thomas Lang have their online schools too.

**MD**: Can beginner students also find content that suits them at Play Better Drums?

**LP**: Definitely. A lot of it is based on fundamentals which is what my teachers always talked about. There's a lick of the month series but that's the only series that's based on licks, all the rest of the site is based on fundamentals like hand and foot technique. Students also learn to improvise, improve their time, and improve their ability to speak in 16th notes, 32nd notes, 16th note triplets, and their ability to string ideas together. A lot of sites will teach you a groove or a fill with no concept of how it all comes together. I think that beginners and intermediate drummers could benefit because the courses are so fundamental based.

> It was tough at the beginning, even though you have friends who recommend you and tell people about you, it doesn't mean that you land, hit the city, and start geting gigs.

**MD**: Can you tell us about your biggest influences, whether it's drummers or not?

**LP**: My dad was obviously my first influence, he taught me how to play and he introduced me to Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson. I remember really gravitating towards Louie Bellson, I really loved his playing, he was so musical. I was really into his playing, I actually ended up writing him a letter when I was eight years old. He wrote back and sent a signed photo with a little letter and I had it framed. Shortly after that, I went to see him play at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, then he did a percussion appearance at a festival with a big band and I got to meet him backstage, he was such a nice guy, a complete gentleman.

At eight years old I remember being introduced to the Buddy Rich Memorial concert videos with Weckl, Gadd, and Dennis. I was really taken by Dennis Chambers. As a teenager both him and Weckl were my absolute favorites. Then, of course Steve Gadd, Vinnie Colaiuta, Simon Phillips, and all the usual suspects. Another one of my top favorites is Steve Ferrone, I absolutely love his playing, I got to see him play a few times and I would play along to his records endlessly. Will Kennedy was a huge favorite, Virgil Donati, Thomas Lang of course. Later, I got into Tony Williams, Jeff Hamilton, and Keith Carlock. I got into Buddy Rich a little later, I was always aware of him, I would watch his videos, but I really got into him in my twenties.

**MD**: You played with some heavyweight musicians like Mike Stern, Randy Brecker, and Tom Scott. Can you tell us about those experiences?

**LP**: I played with Mike Stern in 2013-2014 and that was a great experience, it was a real special moment in my life for me because I was such a huge fan of Mike Stern, of course he had played with all those great drummers, that's how I found out about many of them. But aside from the drummers he played with, I loved his playing. There was a moment where I knew his playing so well that it almost felt like I knew what he was going to play with his comping and stuff. I know his tunes upside down, inside out so on the gig, I was just raring to go and we played all his tunes. It was a trio thing at the 55 Bar in New York with Janek Gwizdala, we also did a recording session.

**MD**: What was that recording session for?

**LP**: The recording session was for an educational play along app but it never came to fruition, hopefully it will one day. We also recorded some other stuff and were supposed to do something in 2020 but of course, the pandemic happened, but hopefully we will be able to play again soon.

Two years after I got to LA, I got

to play with Mitch Forman and Tim Lefebvre, we did a record with a saxophone player named Nelson Rangell in a beautiful studio in Los Angeles. I did three records with Nelson including a pair titled *Red* and *Blue* and Randy Brecker played on a track on one of those records. I also played with Tom Scott a couple of years ago, that was great. I got to play all those classic tunes that Steve Gadd played.

I also did a few gigs under my own name in 2018-2019 with Luis Conte. That was a fantastic experience. I put a band together with Mitch Forman, Brandon Fields, which are two guys that I've been listening to my whole life. Playing with those guys was just so amazing!! Playing with people you grew up listening to is a weird but great experience because you know their playing so well. There's a real difference when you're playing with those guys because they're such heavyweights, they're such great players, you really learn a lot. We all play with guys who are on different levels but when you do play with the guys who are on top levels, it's a real reminder why these guys are heavy. Everyone's time is so good, they're so good, that's why I moved to America, I wanted to be surrounded by that level. I was just born 50 years too late! (laughs)

**MD**: Do you still have a practice routine? What are you trying to achieve?

**LP**: Well, I don't have a routine. I never did have a routine. I'm still working on the same stuff because what appeals to me is pretty simple. When I go and see someone play that I like, the things that stick out to me are the musicality, the time, the feel, the vocabulary, and improvisation. I feel like I'm just constantly trying to polish things and make my time and sound better because nothing that the drummers that I like play is particularly complicated. It isn't mathematically complicated, it isn't necessarily always technically amazing, it was just the way they played it. We all know what Gadd plays, we all know the actual notes, we all know what it is, but still no one can play it like that. The same goes for Keith Carlock, Buddy Rich, Dennis Chambers, and Dave Weckl. I was always fascinated by that.

I'm working on being better at stringing ideas together, maintenance practice, practicing independence things, and fundamentals. If I'm ever lacking inspiration, I go back and listen to people that inspired me in the beginning, or I listen to modern guys that inspire me. I'm just trying to polish my time and my sound, so it's not a routine necessarily, I'll do a lot of pad stuff at home on pads with no rebound, I make sure that's taken care of by practicing technique things. Then when I get to the drums, I practice a lot of improvising. Sometimes I'll do something like *The New Breed* by Gary Chester, that book is amazing. But I'm doing a lot of improvising and recording myself and going back and adjusting things. If you record yourself for 30 seconds, you'll have a whole list of things to practice.

**MD**: When you talk about players like Gadd, Weckl and others, you were saying that it is not so much *what* they played

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but *how* they played it. How would you go about developing that quality?

**LP**: There is no secret to it. I think those guys learned to play that way by recording themselves and trying to replicate the things that they enjoyed. I find that a lot of students that I see are very much into working from books and practicing technical things on the pad. They're interested in one handed rolls and independence things, I was just never into any of that stuff when I was young, that's why my technique wasn't together until I was 18 and I saw Thomas Lang. Because during those years, I just wasn't interested in technique, it was just all about trying to sound like those guys and the way to do that is to record yourself. I think it's just a process of constantly a/b'ing and comparing.

I remember asking Weckl about this in that first lesson, I have a bootleg recording of a song he plays on with Mike Stern and the feel on that track is not on top of the beat or rushing, but it's full of energy. When you listen to it, it has pocket, but it has drive, you know what I mean? I keep recording myself and I can't understand what it is. So to get to that point, it's just time in terms of years of trying and trying again and recording yourself over and over. Getting to know your own playing and constantly a/b'ing.

I never did any transcribing; I wasn't interested in playing someone's *exact* same lick. I wanted it to be a rough approximation. If it was a hand/foot combination, it didn't need to be the same, but I wanted it to *sound* the same and I wanted the *vibe* to be the same. There is no secret, it's just listening to a lot of music. I feel like a lot of the young students don't do that. My education was cd's, they're the textbooks. It's interesting now with Instagram and Instagram drummers and Gospel chops. There's this whole weird kind of drums only, chops thing, it's just void of any music whatsoever. My education was just music, I was into drummers that are virtuosos like Dennis Chambers, but it was always hearing them in a musical context, it was listening to Dennis but listening to him play with Steely Dan, that live record. We all know Dennis can play chops forever, he's faster than anybody but I only heard him play music. I feel like, if you listen enough to the records and you record yourself often and you keep comparing, that's the only way. Taste depends on what you're interested in. Two people can listen to a performance or look at a piece of art and walk away with two separate interpretations. When I went to see Dennis Chambers play, the things I took away were different from someone else. Maybe some drummers were impressed by the cross-over thing he did, whereas I took away something different. Some drummers are into mathematical things and some drummers are turned on by other things. My thing was always music. That's because of my dad and those orchestras I played with when I was a kid, it was always about music.

**MD**: Do you have any tips for younger players wanting to make it in the music business?

**LP**: Building a career is a difficult with the way that the world is, let alone the music business. In terms of getting better at the drums, I would just say, listen to music! I know people always say that, but I mean really seek out great recordings. I've also heard people say to not "watch" things all the time. When I was younger, the drummers and the music that I actually watched on tv or on my computer was actually quite limited. It was all listening. You went to a show, and it would be visual and audio, but a lot of my learning was listening. There's a difference when you're watching something or when you're listening to something. I feel like everyone now, because of phones and Instagram, is watching. I would suggest seeking out the records, those are the actual textbooks. That's the real deal, that's where the real information is. If you are ever going to be a good drummer, it means you're going to play with other people, and if you ever earn money as a drummer you'll be playing with other people, so get off Instagram and listen to drummers that are a lot better than you that are playing music and playing with bands. If you see a drummer that you like, find out what records they've been on. Listen to them and then listen to the artists they play with.

I remember enjoying Dennis Chambers and finding out that he played with Mike Stern. Then I would just go off on a tangent and listen to all sorts of Mike Stern records that had other people on them. I remember discovering and really enjoying a New York drummer that I had never heard of named Ben Perowsky who was on a few tracks of one of Stern's records, I loved his playing. It sends you down all sorts of rabbit holes when you work like that. Chick Corea is another one, of course I had heard of Dave Weckl and I realized he played with Chick Corea. But Chick played with hundreds of other drummers and his recording catalogue is huge. You can diversify and grow your horizon by disappearing down Chick's discography rather than it being drummer based. So just listen to a lot of music, find a private teacher, study with lots of different drummers with different approaches and record yourself as much as possible.

That's the number one thing that musicians don't do enough. I played in bands with people who are good players and bad players, but the reason the bad ones are bad, is because they never record themselves. So many people are in that headspace where they just don't want to hear it. And people don't want to ruin the experience of a good gig when they listen back on their way home in the car and they are suicidal. But it can go both ways too, sometimes you can be surprised positively. The more you do it, the more the gap closes between what you think a gig was like and what it's actually like. That's why Peter Erskine and Steve Gadd can go to a recording session and in one take, make all the right decisions. It doesn't matter if it's a film score or a straight-ahead thing. They already know, in real time, as it's happening, what fill and what feel suits the situation. That's what we're all working towards.

> I'm doing a lot of improvising and recording myself and going back and adjusting things. If you record yourself for 30 seconds, you'll have a whole list of things to practice.

**MD**: What are some of your upcoming projects?
**LP**: I'm trying to do a solo record. I had plans to start but then the pandemic happened and priorities have changed. I would really like to do that, particularly with the amount of musicians I know here, I could put a great team together. I would get a bunch of different people to play on it, but there's a couple of people that I would work, write, with and produce with that would be really great. There's a piano player in Los Angeles called Ruslan Sirota and he's an amazing musician, I would love to have him to write some things.

I was supposed to play with Mike Stern this year, we were gonna do something for Meinl cymbals, I was going to do a video shoot and put together a great band with Stern and Bob Franceschini but that got delayed, so hopefully maybe soon. I don't know what's gonna happen, nobody knows what's gonna happen with travelling and stuff as the next few years unfold. I'm gonna continue working on my school, I record a lot here from my studio for clients around the world, I just did a really great album with a bass player called Marco Renteria. We did a whole album remotely and it's really great music. I did a track for an Allan Holdsworth tribute album with Jason Rebello on piano, who I know from back in my days in London. That was fun to do and that's coming out soon. Guitarist Enrico Pinna organized the record. There's also a drum book in the horizon on hand exercises, I don't know of anything that's like it. It's going to be hand exercises but it's going to be routine based. Like you get very specific routines for the gym, I want to do that for the pad. There's a lot of concise, quick and easy to do routines, particularly on a pad with no rebound that really get your hands in shape quickly. I want to collect those into a little exercise book, I'll also continue to work on my school, and recording here. **www.louiepalmer.com www.playbetterdrums.com**

**Check out Louie's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com**

# Laura Donelan
## of Music Pro Insurance

**By Mark Griffith**

Many musicians don't know that specialized musical instrument insurance exists. If they do know about it, they probably assume it's going to cost an arm and leg. And if someone knows about it, and is interested, they probably assume that there is all type of small print and loopholes. But *Modern Drummer* is here to tell you that it DOES exist, and it's not that expensive, and with Music Pro Insurance there isn't any hidden loopholes. Insurance is no fun to talk about, but when you need it, it's the most important thing in the world. And you never think of insurance until you need it. Let's learn about Music Pro Insurance from their only worldwide agent Laura Donelan.

**MD**: Where did the inspiration and idea behind Music Pro Insurance come from?

**LD**: I started here in 1994, and at that point Music Pro didn't even exist. There was a small insurance program that was exclusive to members of the Local 802 New York Musicians Union and nobody in my office wanted to handle it because it wasn't a big book of business. So I volunteered.

SterlingRisk is one of the largest insurance agencies in the country, and in 1999 we teamed up with ASCAP to create Music Pro. At the time it was exclusively for members of ASCAP. Then every BMI member in the world started calling me and telling me how unfair that was. So, we just opened it up to all music equipment owners. That means professionals, studios, weekend warriors, hobbyists, collectors, and really anyone that owns musical equipment. Unfortunately, people assume that if they have a renter's or homeowner's policy, they think they are covered. Then a $10,000.00 condenser mic gets stolen, and their homeowner's insurance company asks what they're doing with a $10,000.00 microphone. The person will say I'm a professional musician, and the insurance company's reply is, "Oh well then that's business equipment, sorry you're not covered."

**MD**: Do homeowner's or renter's insurance ever cover musical equipment?

**LD**: It's possible. If you're not a professional, you could get a rider on your homeowner's policy, but a lot of times, especially if you don't have a rider, traditional insurance might have a limit per item, which isn't going to do you any good if you're a collector or have professional level gear. A lot of times they won't cover equipment if it leaves the house for any reason, but more importantly homeowner's and renter's coverage is often limited to certain losses like fire and theft.

Music Pro also covers accidental breakage, water damage, theft outside the home…my coverage is very broad, our $100.00 deductibles are lower than any homeowners or renter's policy, and our policies are usually cheaper.

**MD**: What is the process of getting a policy, what do people have to do?

**LD**: We have a website that's set up to be direct to consumer, everything's done on the site which is how I'm able to manage about 10,000 clients. The application is all set up on the website, all you have to supply is an itemized list of what you're insuring. Once you get the list up there, the site calculates a price based on the exact total submitted. The payment comes to me, everything usually gets processed the same day, and your list will live on the website forever. You can manage and maintain your list of insured items if you buy or sell stuff or if values change. Everything is done online, it's very automated. Many people (especially drummers) back away when they have to do that initial itemized list. But I tell drummers, you don't itemize every single piece of hardware that you have, just do miscellaneous hardware, and let it go.

**MD**: What challenges do drum policies have, that other musician's policies don't have?

**LD**: Some drummers insist online-item-listing every single clamp, stand, and arm, and if they insist on doing that, fine, but they don't have to. We do cover accidental breakage, so I've had drummers that drop a cymbal and don't notice a hairline fracture and then the

next time they play it, it shatters. That's something we take care of. But if cymbals crack from usage we don't cover damages from normal use.

**MD**: How do you handle endorsers that might not actually pay for, or pay full price for equipment?

**LD**: When people are making up their list, they do have to assign a replacement value for each item. So I tell people if you're sure you're always going to be able to get that reduced price then list the lower price, don't ever list an increased price because you'll have to pay more premium. You can always change a replacement price that if you lose your endorsement or something, and you can always change the values and make changes whenever you need to.

**MD**: How do you differentiate between a working pro, a weekend warrior, or a semi-pro?

**LD**: I really don't. The program is a group policy, it's very cookie cutter, everyone gets the same rates and coverages. Whether you are a gigging musician on the road or a hobbyist, you're going to get the same rates as a recording studio where the stuff never leaves the studio, or a collector. The same rates and same coverages apply to everyone. I don't care what you're doing with your equipment, where it's going, or where it's being used or stored. We care about insuring the gear properly. You're also dealing with a company that knows gear, we know what gear can cost, so we're not going to tell you to get an appraisal, we already know what things are worth.

**MD**: So there is no rate differentiation between different levels of musicians?

**LD**: No.

**MD**: Without giving me a quote, approximately what does your typical policy run a year?

**LD**: You can get 12 or 13,000 thousand

dollars worth of coverage at $175.00 a year. I would say a good 25% of my book is at that $175 minimum premium. I'd say my average policyholders are in the 25 to $75,000 range. I do have a small percent of people that are upwards of a 100 and $200,000. Those are mostly recording studios and big-name bands. I have a few collectors with upwards of like $300,000 worth of guitars.

**MD**: Roughly what does it run for 100 thousand dollars' worth of coverage?

**LD**: About $1270.00 a year. There is a little quick quote widget on my home page where you can play around with numbers and get a quick estimate. They do give a lower rate for computer hardware, so it could wind up actually being less than the quick estimate, depending on if you're including computer equipment.

**MD**: Who needs insurance?

**LD**: Anyone that has substantial investment in instruments and gear; because again, they're probably either not covered at all, or not properly covered on a homeowner's or renter's policy. If you have a couple thousand dollars' worth of gear and you're just doing it as a hobby maybe you don't care. But musicians amass a lot of stuff over the course of a career or a lifetime. When most musicians have to make that list, they'll think they have maybe $10,000 worth of gear, then they put their list together and find out they have $25,000 worth of gear. That's a big financial investment that should be protected.

**MD**: How many companies are there like Music Pro, and what makes you guys different?

**LD**: Customer service. There are a few companies that do the same thing that we do. But I'm different because I'm a huge nerd for my job. I know my clients are not 9:00 to 5:00 Monday to Friday people. When I say it's usually a same day turn around for applications or

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changes, I mean it. I check the site on weekends and holidays because I know that someone might be putting in an application or a change right before they get on a plane. I was on the phone with someone in California last night at 7:00 pm. That's the nature of my clientele.

**MD**: Our world has had a lot of claims in the last 10 years. From floods to wildfires, I'm sure there have been more claims that ever before, how has that affected Music Pro?

**LD**: COVID really hit my business hard because suddenly a lot of my clients (musicians) stopped working. However, my loss ratio those years was really good because nobody was on the road, and nobody was leaving their house. I know that the world of insurance is in a state of flux the past couple of years, but because I'm such a niche and in a bubble, like a lot doesn't apply to me. I have different problems than the rest of them, and I don't have some of their problems.

**MD**: What is the claim process like if someone unfortunately needs to use your services?

**LD**: A lot of times I'm going to be the first phone call because I'm all the client knows. There is an 800 number that's available 24/7 just to make an initial report. You can also e-mail a claim in, there's forms that you can download. But I always recommend that a client call the 800 number because it's a slightly faster turnaround time in getting the file set. I don't personally handle claims, the adjuster is the one that the client would be dealing with directly. Everything depends on the situation. If it's a theft, we want to see a police report, if it's some type of accidental breakage we want a diagnostic report, a written estimate for repairs, and if it can be repaired.

**MD**: Have there been any extraordinary claims that you have handled recently?

**LD**: I can't name names, but after Hurricane Sandy we paid out like $1,000,000 worth of claims. One of the biggest ones was a client in Staten Island that's been with me for 30 years, and his claim alone in was about $250,000. I've had recent claims from the wildfires in California. A few years ago, I had a band on the road and that got into a head on collision with a tractor trailer that was really bad. Both of the drivers were killed, the band was severely injured, and of course all their gear was in splinters.

> Traditional insurance might have a limit per item, which isn't going to do you any good if you're a collector or have professional level gear

**MD**: Is there any restrictions about domestic or international travel and claims?

**LD**: No, it's worldwide coverage.

**MD**: How about if or when an airline loses, or damages a piece of gear?

**LD**: Loss or damage during air travel or any kind of travel is covered. I actually have specific wording in the policy to include loss or damage that might stem from a TSA agent taking something out of a case and not putting it back in the case correctly, and then it gets tossed around and damaged. Or even just careless baggage handlers. That's all covered.

**MD**: What if someone is shipping something that they sold, and it is lost or damaged? There's a whole lot of gear sellers out there. How about someone who's selling gear and is shipping it?

**LD**: Yes, I have a lot of those clients, we cover all of that.

**MD**: Do you guys cover rented gear, and backline equipment?

**LD**: The policy does include some automatic coverage for rented gear. Whether it's backline equipment or drummers renting a tour kit. The policy automatically covers up to 25,000 for up to 30 days for rented gear at no charge, and I can accommodate rentals exceeding those parameters for an additional and nominal charge, so that that comes in handy.

**MD**: Should music stores have this type of insurance?

**LD**: I don't handle music stores; their clients are my clients. I don't have a separate program for dealers or retailers.

**MD**: Are you the only Music Pro agent in the world?

**LD**: Music Pro is owned by ASCAP and SterlingRisk. Sterling has been around for 80 or 90 years. I don't know how many hundreds of employees they have, but yes, I'm the only one at Sterling that handles Music Pro.

**MD**: So, if someone is dealing with any sort of Music Pro Insurance, short of a claim, they are speaking to you.

**LD**: Yes.

**MD**: Wow that's a great thing to know. As most of us know, when you deal with any insurance company, you wind up talking to 20 different people, and having to repeat the same story 20 different times.

**MD**: How many clients do you have worldwide?

**LD**: About 10,000.

**MD**: It sounds like you have thought of and covered everything, are you a musician?

**LD**: No, I'm just a big fan of music and musicians.

> Musicians amass a lot of stuff over the course of a career or a lifetime... they'll think they have maybe $10,000 worth of gear, then they put their list together and find out they have $25,000 worth of gear.

**MD**: Well thanks for offering us musicians a needed service at a reasonable price. I hope no musician ever needs your services, but I feel better knowing that Music Pro clients are in your hands. **https://www.musicproinsurance.com**

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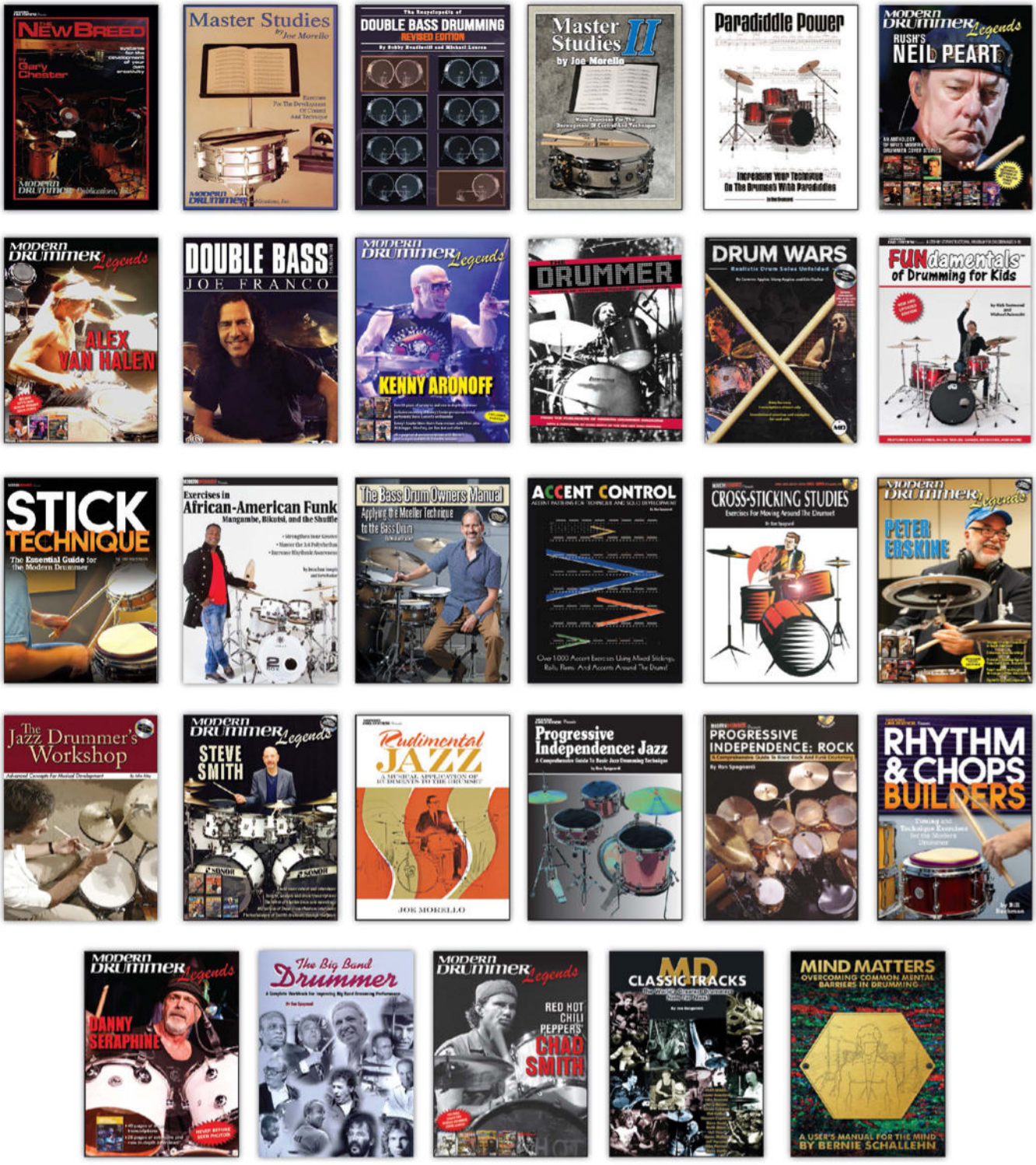



Available in print and digital format at **moderndrummer.com** or from your favorite music retailer

# Danny Schreiber of Quor

By Mark Griffith

The prog-metal band Quor has been together since 2013, and their newest member is drummer Danny Schreiber. The band just got back from a Japanese tour which found them playing at the Osaka club called Hokage', as well as Babel Rock Tower and Zirco in Tokyo. Hokage' is owned by trash-percussionist Isariyo Atsushi also known as "Sano San," who also played on Quor's new single "Sam Meets Sara," which can be streamed on Spotify. Chris Baseford (Methods of Mayhem and Nickelback) is producing the band, and Quor's full length record will be released soon. Schreiber, from Olympia WA, is also a visual and a tattoo artist operating out of his studio called The Copper Wolf.

**MD**: How long have you been playing?
**DS**: I've been playing 30 years, since I was 12. I started out playing in the school band and I got into playing percussion. Then I picked it up the drums pretty naturally. I was obsessed with the drums early on, I was playing nonstop, and I started gigging when I was 13. I ended up getting a Roland endorsement when I was 17 because I was playing and creating tracks with a hip hop group. Around that time, I did some tracks for Chaz Hayes Management (Spice 1, E-40). In the early 2000s I was in a band called Pome that got signed to Atlantic Records under Velvet Hammer music management, we thought that things were going to explode until they didn't. That knocked me back a bit and I got involved in Visual Art and Tattoos.

I played in lots of bands and had started losing faith in the whole music industry when Brian (the singer from Quor) called. They were in the middle of recording an album and they had lost their drummer. They asked if I could record some tracks and I did, and they loved what I did on that track. A couple months later they were shooting the video and asked if I wanted to be in the video. That was for the song "Twiddle in the Middle" which did pretty well online and streaming. After that, I joined the band and we've been going for it ever since.

**MD**: What and who are your influences? Where are you coming from drum-wise?
**DS**: I think I have a pretty eclectic musical background. I play guitar and I sang in a band after Pome broke down. Dave Buckner (the drummer from Papa Roach) played with me for a bit in that band, so my rhythmic sense comes from a lot of different places. As far as drummers go Matt Garstka is at the top of the heap, Anika Niles drumming is fantastic. On the other hand, I love Matt Cameron, Abe Cunningham, and Danny Carey. Those guys are the heavyweights!
**MD**: Did the visual arts start before or after music?
**DS**: After. I didn't even know I could do anything in the visual arts, I was always a musician. For a while the music business was certain, and then it became a lot less certain. I was always interested and appreciative of the visual arts, but I

didn't think I could do it. Then I tried it and found that I love creating visual art as well as drumming. It obviously goes with the culture of the music, I went back to school for visual arts, I started practicing, and in 2015 I opened up the tattoo studio and fine art gallery. It's really taken off.

**MD**: Who are some of your art influences?

**DS**: I love Caravaggio, Van Gogh, as far as like more modern painters, I love Lavely Miller and Nicolas Uribe. Roberto Ferri is a modern master. There is a really cool tattoo artist out of France whose name is Thomas Carli Jarlier, he is just fantastic. One of the cool things about the Internet is that now you're exposed to so many awesome people doing awesome stuff.

**MD**: What kind of a what kind of gear are you playing?

**DS**: I play Tama Starclassic Maple drums, Meinl Cymbals, and I have a Black Panther Copper snare that I love, it sounds great.

**MD**: You have really fast feet, what kind of pedals are you using?

**DS**: That's an interesting question. I have always played Iron Cobra's; they are my go to. But I just got the DW Direct Drive pedals, and I really want to love them. Direct Drive is a specific feel, and it takes a while to get used to that. With Quor, I do a lot of fast double bass stuff, but there's also a lot of slower grooves that needs to happen. I'm finding that the direct drives are great if I just want to burn through some double bass tunes, but I'm finding it a little hard to find that balance between having the speed and the balance for the groove stuff. I'm gonna keep working with the direct drive for a bit and see what happens.

**MD**: What kind of sticks are you using?

**DS**: I've been using Scorpion Percussion sticks for a while, they are a fantastic company, and the sticks are great. They are the longest lasting sticks I've used in 30 years.

**MD**: What ones are you using?

**DS**: I use the natural and I was playing the 7A's, but their sticks are just a little weightier than normal Pro Mark or Vic Firth. I felt like I could use the 7A because it had the weight of a 5A, and then I moved up to a 5A. I've used the same pair of sticks for two weeks and they don't even start to fray. I used a pair of 5A's for a bunch of stuff and I developed a love for the 5A's. I'm a rimshot player and typically Pro Mark sticks will last a couple practice sessions before they're gone, but the Scorpion's last 10 times longer.

**MD**: Do you use their grip?

**DS**: No, I haven't tried it yet.

**MD**: I have to say, when you mentioned 5A sticks I was going to say that based on your music, 5A sounded a little small. But 7A? Wow that's thin!

**DS**: They're a medium taper stick. I used to play a long more pronounced tapered 5A stick from Pro Mark. But the feel of the Scorpion 7A's felt more solid. When I first tried the Scorpion 5A's they felt a little heavy for me, but now I love them. The ball tip gives you a really pronounced ping and bell sound too.

**MD**: Your band is a unique combination of faster metal and groove stuff, how would you describe Quor's music?

**DS**: Quor is a big sounding three-piece band that is very drum and rhythm driven. Sonically and melodically our songs are similar to what you would hear from Mastodon. There's definitely melody, our singer's vocal lines have a great sense of phrasing. I think we're much more accessible than a lot of stuff out today though. We're excited to watch it grow and see where it goes. Follow Danny on Instagram, **instagram.com/cognitronic** and go to **www.thecopperwolf.com**

# Explosive CONFIDENCE Through Drumming

By Chris Lesso

Where does true confidence come from? It's found in the evidence of actions when you faced your dragons, and came out the other side. It's not just thinking, but KNOWING. Everyday, we earn another 1%, but we don't always see those steps. Micro-breakthroughs are all around us, if we train ourselves to see them. When challenges become fuel for our growth and setbacks become material for our progress, we become unstoppable. Confidence is earned in only one way, by getting in the arena.

### An undeniable groove isn't created by questioning yourself.

*"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken." Oscar Wilde*

It starts with us! A world class drummer lifts an average band to become awesome, but an average drummer will drag a great band to being only mediocre. We're the living heartbeat of the music. Make no doubt about it, we are guides that have the power to transform. Drummers are the leaders from behind, the servant heroes with the foundation. The leadership we need comes from trusting our inner voice. The more we practice this, the stronger our rhythmic presence becomes, as we lead with faith. By surrendering to the music and trusting our instincts, we go forth on this journey together.

True confidence is revealed only through actions that access the possibility and potential that lies within you. Part of the journey of drumming is to face the fears of self-doubt, and come out the other side with an unshakeable certainty that resonates in everything you do. The music comes alive through your inner fire of confidence to affect positive change in the world. When you believe in yourself (even if you're the only one that does,) you'll get stronger one day at a time, and build explosive confidence on the drums and in life.

### The Purdie Factor

*You Done It! You Done Hired The Hit Maker, Bernard "Pretty" Purdie.*

Steadfast self-belief must emanate from the drummer, or the whole ship sinks. A story that embodies this is about drumming legend Bernard Purdie. In his early recording studio days, after setting up his drums he'd place two signs on either side of his kit. One declared, 'You Done It!' The other continued with, 'You Done Hired The Hit Maker Bernard 'Pretty' Purdie.' (Bernard knows how to keep things fun). I've never traveled with my own signs, but I love the spirit of taking charge with

total certainty and a playful positive energy. With his trademark humor and wit, Purdie stayed true to what he was capable of, by uplifting all those around him with unbeatable confidence. You can do the same. The greatness within us craves to see the light of day, but it must be fought for, one action at a time. You'll never regret revealing *too much* of your heart at the drums and in life. The fact that you're seeking your best self through drumming means you're already on the path. Go big!

Hold out your thumbs and feel your fingerprints. There are no two like them in all the billions of people that have ever graced the planet. The voice you speak is all your own, and it's is a voice the world needs to hear. Bernard Purdie knows he doesn't have the facility of some of the other titans of the drumming world, but no one can be him, therefore, he OWNS him. What's your 'superpower' in drums and life? We only have one shot to delve into this deep ocean of drumming, so let's make it your mission to get great at the few things that represent your truest heart. Don't add but delete, using simplicity and minimalism to go all in on what makes you stand out. Don't die with your music still inside you! Take the actions to ignite explosive confidence that will be your gift to the world.

### The Instrument is You

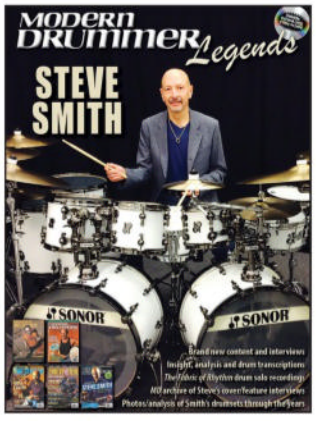
*"I can tell whether a person can play just by the way he stands." Miles Davis* Stop playing the drums, start playing YOU. You are the instrument. The bombshell moment of clarity that birthed the LTR DRUMMING approach and attitude, was that we're not just playing drums, we ARE the drums. We can embody the rhythm in our inner and outer worlds. It's in the way we walk, talk, breathe, and think.

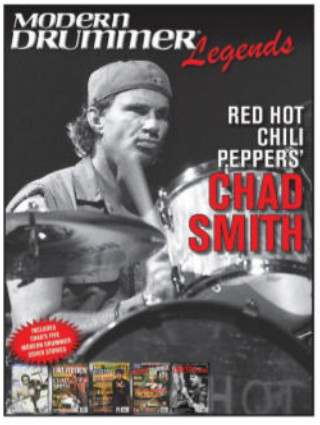
What's in your body, mind, and heart that you're striving to get out into the world? Ultimately, there's nowhere to hide, because the drums never lie. Many people have said to me, 'I don't know what makes me unique', or, 'There's nothing I play that sets me apart'. But the truth is, no two drummers strike a drum in the same way. You simply can't *not* be you. Instead of running from this truth, let's boldly celebrate it for all to see. On this journey we don't just 'play drums'; that's where mediocrity lives. When you express maximum confidence on the drums, YOU become the instrument. Like a dream catcher, the drums capture your creative spark and magnify it to the world.

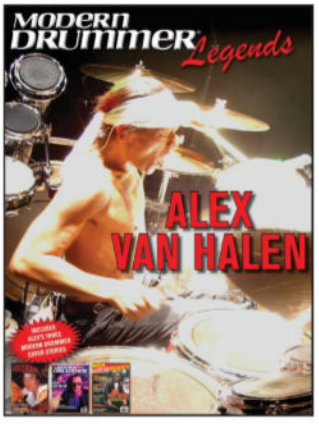
**Check out Chris's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com**

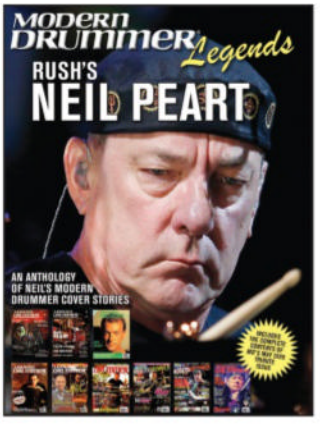
MODERN DRUMMER

The *Legends* Collection



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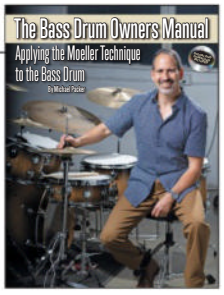
# The Bass Drum Owners Manual:

## The Ankle Stroke

By Michael Packer




This month *Modern Drummer* will continue to include excerpts from Michael Packer's essential book on bass drum control and technique *The Bass Drum Owners Manual: Applying the Moeller Technique to the Bass Drum.* As you will see, this is a new way of thinking about bass drum (and foot) control that is based in an old, popular, and useful hand technique called The Moeller Technique. Michael addresses the essential components of bass drum and hi-hat control. Let Michael's wisdom and the wisdom of the Moeller Technique help you improve the control, sound, and eventually speed, of your feet, regardless of musical style. This month Michael addresses the bass drum foot and breaks down the ankle stroke as used on the bass drum.

**The Ankle Stroke**

This stroke is used when playing a series of two or more notes and the tempo is too fast for consecutive leg strokes. It's the same as the tap stroke for the hands.

In the wrist as in the ankle, we have a ball joint that allows for a large range of motion up and down. If we extend all the way up or down there is stress and pain. We are most comfortable and productive when positioned in the middle. As with the hand in playing position, we simply pivot the wrist. We do the same with the ankle.

After the preparation puts the foot in playing position the ankle pivots guiding the pedal to play successive rebound strokes. Try to let the beater come back as far as possible to maximize the rebound.

**Learning the Ankle Stroke**

To understand how to maximize the rebound by using ankle strokes, place your foot and leg in their playing position and pivot from the ankle. Try to let the beater come back as far as possible. See example 6A.

Ex. 6a

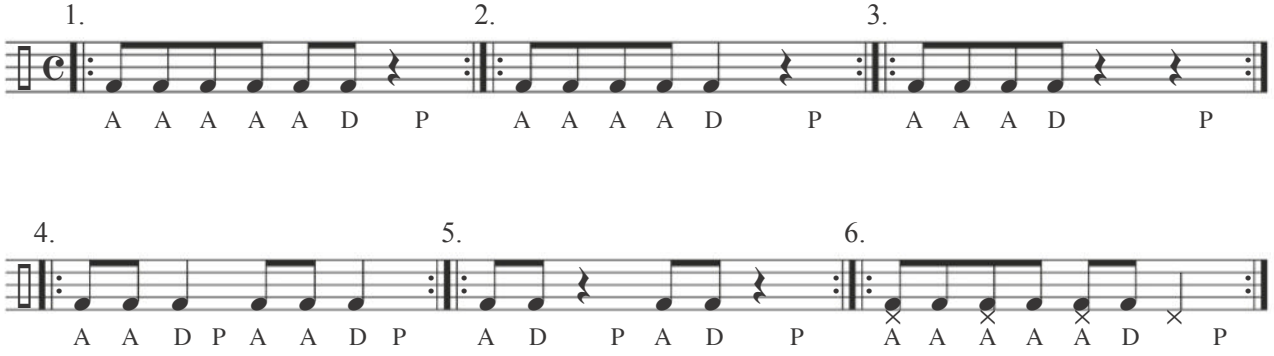
Knowing the tempo at which you must switch from using successive leg strokes to ankle strokes and vice versa is very important. It depends solely on the speed of the strokes being played. Slow strokes can be played with the leg and fast strokes with the ankle. Play the following exercise from slow to fast and fast to slow. The transition should sound as smooth as possible. Make sure to remain relaxed during this exercise. See example 6B

Ex. 6b

**The Down Motion**

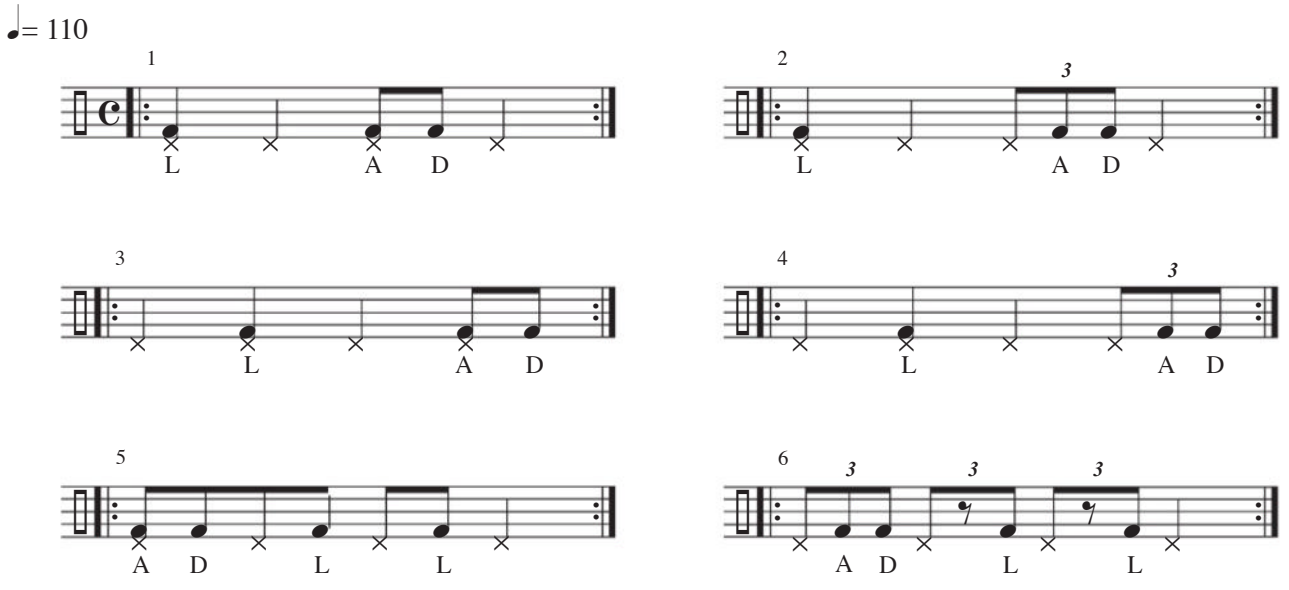
The down motion occurs just after a single note, or the last group of notes are played. While simultaneously transferring your weight to the heel, drop the heel to the heel plate. This allows the beater to rebound off of the head. The foot and leg rest on the ground completely relaxed when not playing.

**Ankle Stroke Exercises**



**Ankle and Leg Strokes Combined**

Here are a series of exercises designed to develop independence between the feet.



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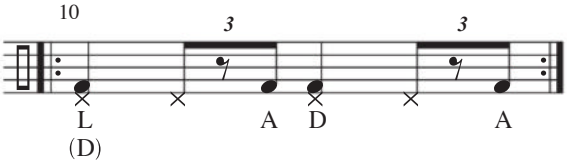


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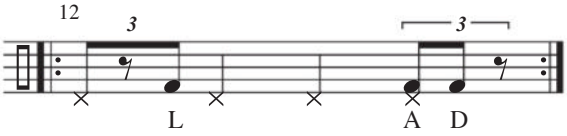


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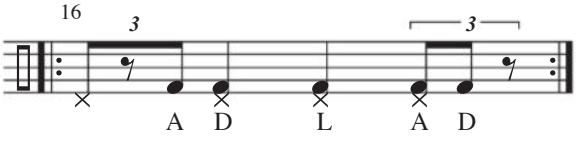


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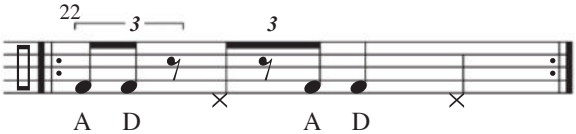


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**Check out Michael's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *The Bass Drum Owners Manual* at moderndrummer.com**

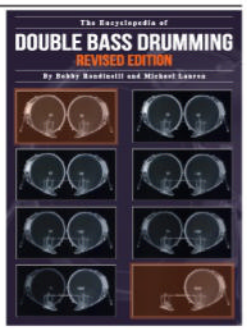
# The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming

## Binary Fills

By Bobby Rondinelli and Michael Lauren

In the new and revised edition of the *Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming*, Bobby includes nine new double bass drumming chapters. The new and expanded edition covers contemporary techniques such as bass drum double strokes, feet-only exercises, binary and ternary rhythms, "skiplets", beat turnarounds, the "ladder", and playing doubles with the hands while playing singles with the feet. These concepts will challenge your playing while expanding your double bass vocabulary. If practiced with intention and diligence, this material will help to prepare you for the demands of today's music. This material is advanced, but completely attainable for anyone who has completed the previous chapters in my book.

This month Bobby explains his concept of binary fills. Remember that most beats are written with strong foot lead (if you are right-handed, then that would be your right foot.) Some right-handed players lead with their left foot— whatever works for you is OK. Always strive for great quality of sound and groove and remember to start slowly at first. Have fun!




-Don't worry about speed try to make your feet (and hands) sound even.

-Work on getting your weak foot to sound as loud as your strong foot.

-Then work on getting your hands as loud as (equal to) your feet

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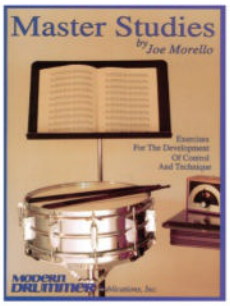
**Check out Bobby's *Modern Drummer* profile pages and get your copy of *The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming* at moderndrummer.com**

# Triplets with Flams

By Joe Morello

In previous months we have learned about an often-ignored sound of drumming called Flat Flams. Then we learned about Joe Morello's creative way of combining eighth notes with Flams.This month we will continue with a study of playing triplets with Flams. Flams are useful on both the snare drum and drumset applications as both fills and within grooves. Joe Morello really breaks everything about down about playing and using flams in his legendary book *Master Studies.*




## Eighth Notes with Flams

These exercises should first be played as written, on a snare drum or practice pad, without accenting the flams. After playing these at a medium dynamic, practice them at various dynamic levels, from very soft to very loud. You should also practice different ways of playing the flams, from very closed— almost "flat"— to somewhat open. As with any exercise, adapt it to your own particular needs, and to the type of music that you will be playing. A rudimental drummer will probably use a lot of arm motion in playing the flams; a concert drummer might want to work on these using finger and wrist control; a drum set player might want to play the flams between different drums. Use your imagination. These examples are only to give you ideas.

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This following paragraph closes Joe Morello's *Master Studies* book, we are including it here, because it should be applied to ALL books, practice, learning, and ultimately creativity.

*"These patterns are not necessarily the ones you will use when playing, but you will be able to use the same techniques in any way you want. You may be able to hear a million "hip" phrases in your mind, but if you can't get them out, they won't do you any good. So these exercises are created to give you the facility to play what you hear in your mind. These exercises may also stimulate your imagination, which will, in turn, develop your own creativity."* **Joe Morello**

**Check out Joe's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Master Studies* at moderndrummer.com**

# Understanding the Language of Music

## Basic Chord Structure

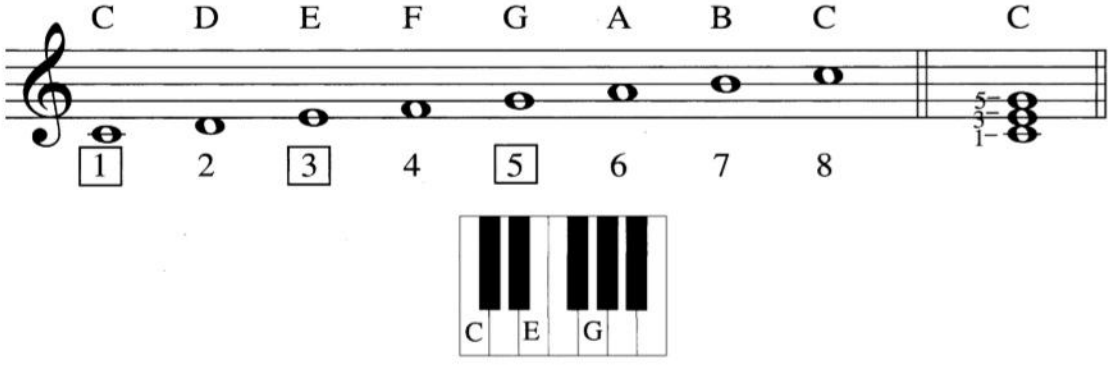
By Ron Spagnardi

*Modern Drummer* founder Ron Spagnardi wrote an excellent book called *Understanding the Language of Music, a Drummer's Guide to Theory and Harmony.* This book spells out the basics of theory and harmony in a very easy to understand way. It is a fantastic book for drummers looking to learn about the language of music beyond drumming. We are honored to reprint the parts of Ron's book here in *Modern Drummer* for everyone to read and learn.

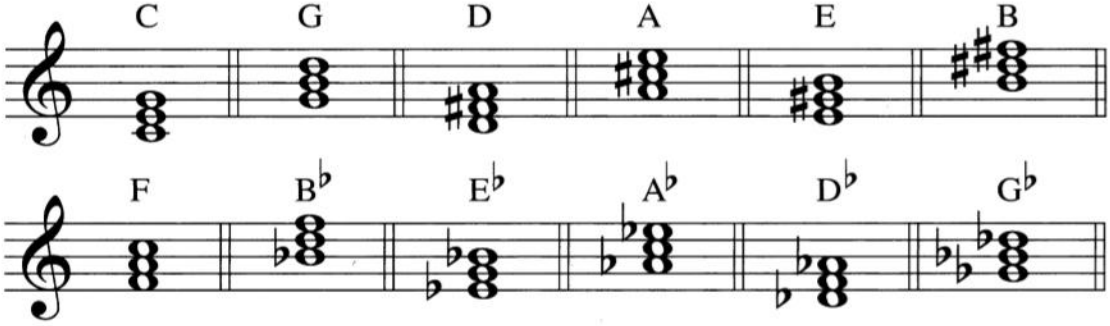
The last time we learned about key signatures and the 12 major scales. Now you'll see why scales are the foundation of chord structure. A chord can be defined as three or more notes played simultaneously, in harmony with one another. The most basic chord consists of three notes and is called a triad. Triads are built by stacking three notes from a scale. Look at the C major scale below.

**Major Triads**

To build a C major triad, we use the first degree of the scale, C (also called the root,) E (the third degree,) and G (the 5th degree.) The three notes played together make up a C major triad.

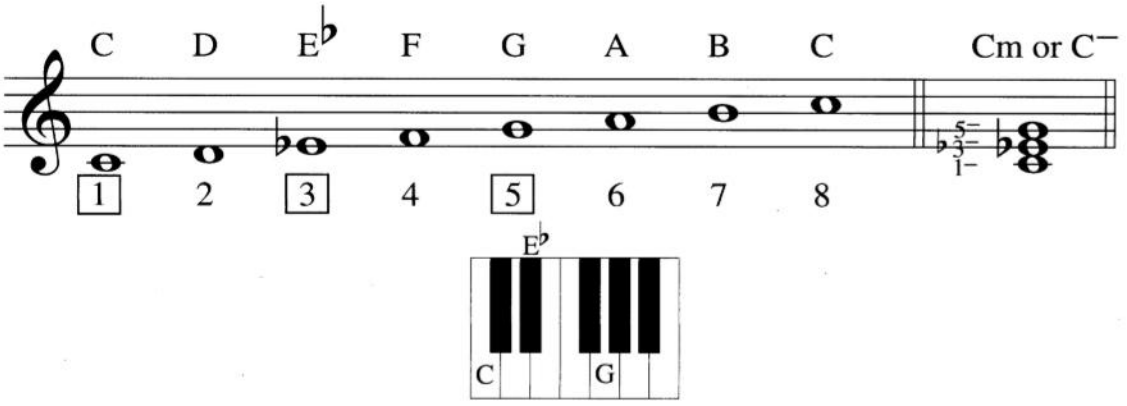



In the next example, you'll find the major triads in all 12 keys. Each one built on the root, third, and fifth degree of its scale. Practice and learn them all.

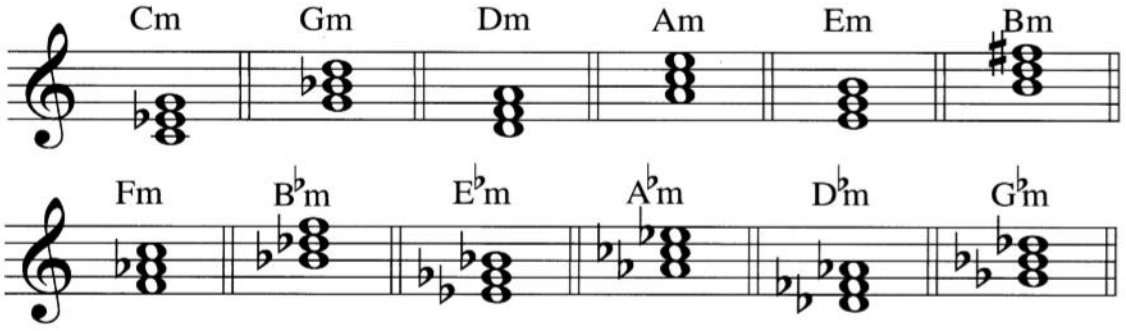


**Minor Triads**

There are three primary triad alterations, each of which produces a different tonal quality. The first is a minor triad. To build a minor triad, lower the third degree of the scale by a half step, leaving the root and the fifth the same. The E now becomes an Eb. The symbol for a C minor triad can be either a Cm and or C-

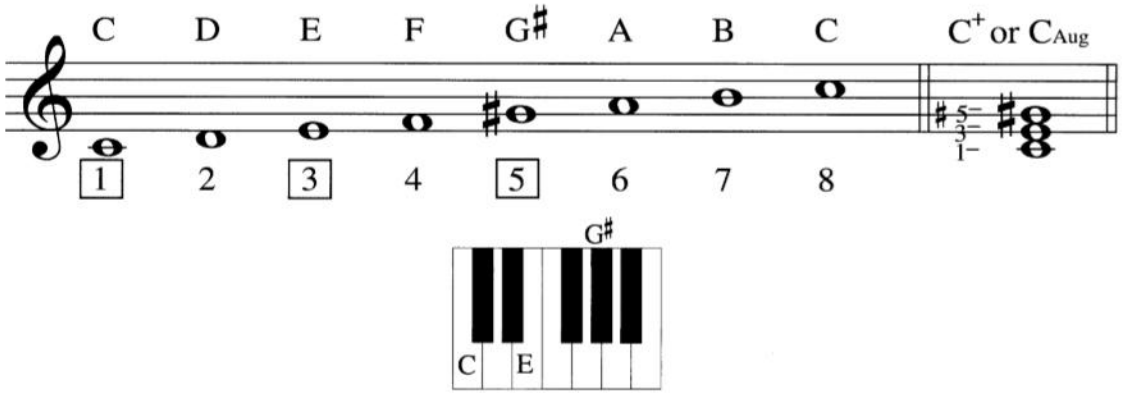



Below you'll find the minor triads in all 12 keys. Each one built on the root, lowered third, and fifth degree of the scale.

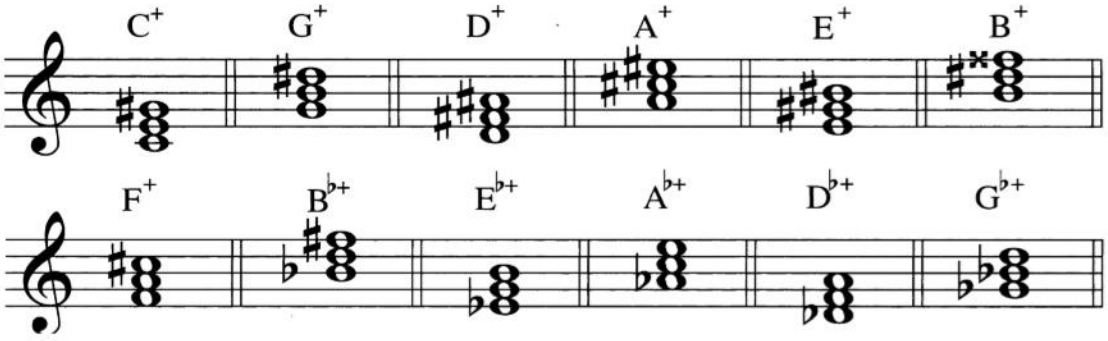



**Augmented Triads**

To build an augmented triad raise the fifth degree of the scale by a half step, leaving the root and third the same. The G now becomes a G#. The symbol for a C augmented triad can be C aug or C+.

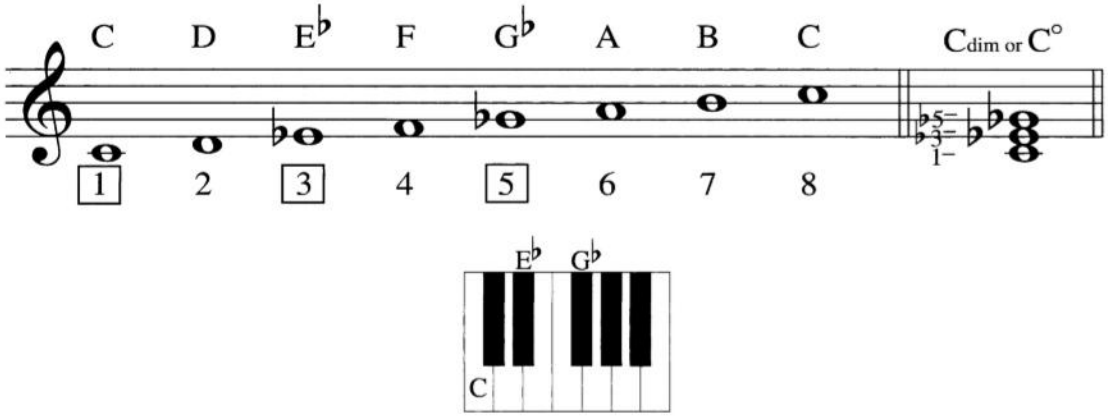


Here are the augmented triads in all 12 keys. In the B augmented chord, you'll see an x indicated before the top note. This symbol is referred to as a double sharp and means that the note is raised by two half steps. In this particular case the F would be raised to a G.

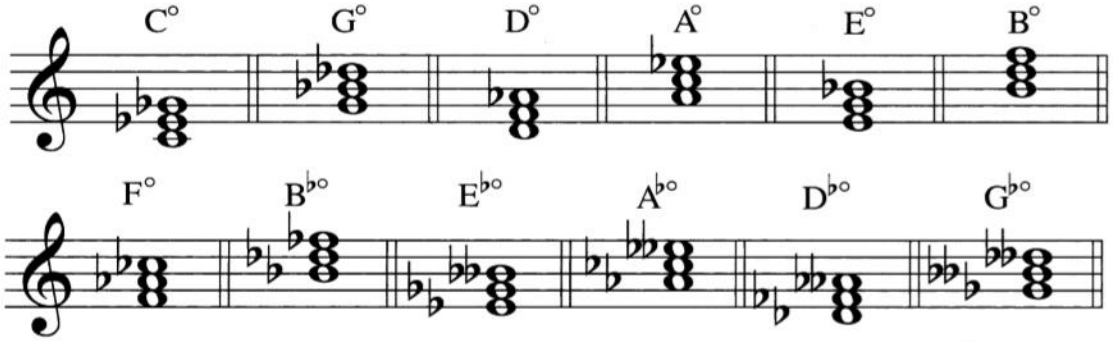



**Diminished Triads**

Our final alteration is called diminished. To build a diminished triad lower the third and the fifth degree of the scale by a half step. The E now becomes Eb and the G becomes Gb. The symbol for a C diminished triad is either C dim or C o.




Here are the diminished triads in all 12 keys. Try them all on your keyboard. You'll notice that within the last four chords there are notes that have two flat signs in front of them. Those notes are to be lowered by two half steps.




Spend time practicing and learning the four types of triads major, minor, augmented, and diminished in every key. Next time we'll learn how triads can be played in several positions known as inversions.

**Check out Ron's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Snare Drum Duets* at moderndrummer.com**

# Groove Concepts for Fusion-Funk Music

By Stephane Chamberland

I began playing with the Carl Mayotte Fusion Quintet in 2018. We have recorded four albums since 2018 and have had the chance to release a play along series for drum and bass with Hudson Music in 2023. Creating the charts was challenging but also an amazing learning experience. In this article I want to share some of the grooves I play in the song "Cocotte" that is available on the Hudson Music web site as a separated track, or the entire book available on the Hudson Music app. I think it's a great idea if you want to use these grooves as exercises. You can create form and also learn from the concepts to create your own grooves.

### Orchestrating the melody on the toms

During the intro, I am orchestrating part of the melody on the toms in a way that will support the music and I am also adding some ghost notes on the snare to create shapes. I was inspired by Dave Weckl for this one. You can actually move your hi-hat hand onto the floor tom without changing the rhythms and it will make the groove sound bigger. You'll notice my right hand is on the floor tom and it's the left hand only that is moving around the toms, keeping the snare on 2 and 4. I have written the groove as straight 16ths, but we are going to swing the 16ths. This is a concept you can apply to many other grooves as well. You want to work this groove up to 91 bpm but start slowly.

### Opening the downbeats on the hi-hats

Another concept I used is opening the hi-hats on the downbeats when I play 8th notes. Don't forget we are still swinging the 16th notes. I was inspired by Dennis Chambers to do that and I always felt it brings a strong pulse to the groove. In this example we start with a crash cymbal but make sure not to repeat it. Stay on the hi- hats when you repeat. The bass drum here follows the bass guitar line and the steady 2 and 4 on the snare makes a clear understanding of the feel. The ghost notes are again added to make the beat funkier and add dynamics. Compose a groove, open the hats on down beats and add ghost notes. Magic!

### Playing the left foot hi hats on upbeats

I like keeping my left foot hi-hat on the down beats, but in this song I shifted it to the upbeats to lift the music even more. You can use both here. I can only do this when my hand is keeping time on the ride. If you want to insert some left foot hi-hats while keeping time on it, it's possible but it's a totally different approach. In this case, by putting the right hand on the ride, it frees my hi-hat for these variations. You can splash the hi-hat like we did with the first groove or keep it closed and tight. I put my foot far up on the plate to feel the pedal more and get a tighter sound. When it comes to my cymbal choice, I used an 18" Sabian, 'Ed Thigpen' Signature ride for this track. Flat rides were more popular in the 90's but I like to bring this sound back in my playing.

### Adaptation is the key

Adapting is the key to your personal sound and expression. This is the step we fear to take sometimes but I encourage you to play the song with my original groove to inspire you to create your own. In the book, you have a version with click, and one with no click, to work on time and listening. Have fun!

From the book: *The Ultimate Jazz Fusion Play-Along Drum Edition*
*The Music of Carl Mayotte*, Song: "Cocotte." Album: Pop de ville vol.1
Couresy of Hudson Music **www.hudsonmusic.com www.stephanechamberland.com**
Link to the track: **https://hudsonmusic.com/product/cocotte-drums/**
Link to the book: **https://hudsonmusic.com/product/the-ultimate-jazz-fusion-play-along-for-drums/**

**Check out Stephane's drummer profile page at moderndrummer.com**

# HalBlaine's 1950s Rogers "Constellation" Drum Set

By Donn Bennett

***The set that started it all…***

By now, studio drummer Hal Blaine's legend is pretty well known. He is widely considered the most recorded musician of all time. His extraordinarily prolific career spanned four decades from the the 1950s through the 1980s and produced an estimated 35,000 recordings that included 6,000 singles, 150 top 10 hits, 40 number one hits and six consecutive Grammy records of the year. He was so adept at crafting the perfect drum part, that he was routinely asked to replace a band's existing drummer when it came time to record, for this he's commonly referred to as "your ten favorite drummers".

Hal passed in 2019. It's impossible to express the magnitude of his legacy. He literally defined rock and pop drumming in the 1960s and helped create the soundtrack for entire generations of music fans.

Hal's legendary rock drumming career came about practically by accident. In the late 1950s he was establishing himself as a jazz drummer. He'd landed a gig in a well-respected jazz combo when he got a last minute invitation to join rock 'n roll singer, Tommy Sands' band. Initially, Hal wasn't interested. He was happy with his jazz gig and had never even tried playing rock. Eventually, the opportunity to record for a major label, tour the world, and a fat pay raise helped change his mind. It was a wise move. As a member of Tommy Sands' band, Hal established himself as the "go-to" rock drummer at a time when rock 'n roll was erupting into the massive cultural phenomenon it eventually became. Before long he was the most in demand drummer in Los Angeles and his legendary career was kicking into high gear.

During this pivotal period of Hal's career, he played this late 1950's Rogers "Constellation" drum set. He purchased the set during his tenure with Sands and continued playing it into the early stages of his rock and roll studio career. The set includes a 14 x 20 bass drum, 9 x 13 mounted tom, 16 x 16 floor tom and a 5 x 14 snare drum with Rogers Eagle badges. The original 1950s Remo Diplomat heads remain on the top and bottoms of the toms and on

the top of the snare. The bass drum has calf skin heads on front and back. The drum is filled with about 6 inches of cut up squares of newspaper for muffling. Hal would continue to use this combination of calfskin and cut up newsprint to achieve his signature bass "thump" for most of his career. The drums are finished in a Sparkling Blue Pearl wrapped finish with Rogers "Bread and Butter" lugs and early Swiv-O-Matic mounts. The bass and toms are constructed of 3-ply wooden shells with reinforcing rings and black painted interiors. The snare has a custom fiberglass shell wrapped in Sparkling Blue Pearl and Rogers hardware and is particularly notable in the evolution of Hal's drum set.

In 1959 Bob Yeager opened the Hollywood Professional Drum Shop. The shop soon became the epicenter of the Los Angeles area drum scene. Yeager employed an extremely gifted and ambitious Allen Blaemire in his repair department. Blaemire was constantly tinkering with inventions that could be useful to drummers. By 1962, he had perfected a drum shell made from fiberglass that produced an exceptionally deep and resonant tone. The drum was soon in high demand amongst top Los Angeles drummers like Earl Palmer, Joe Porcaro, and Hal Blaine. These three drummers were amongst a handful fortunate players who received one of these snares with an engraved "Custom Built" nameplate. This snare marked the beginning of Blaine's relationship with Blaemire's fiberglass drums that would eventually lead to the creation of his multi-tom fiberglass "Monster" drum set. The "Monster" set would become the most recorded instrument in the history of recorded music.

The Blue Sparkle Rogers set was eventually retired and given to the son of Jack Nitzsche around 1965. Jack Nitzsche was the legendary studio engineer who worked with Hal on countless Phil Spector recording sessions. I acquired the set several years after Nitzsche's passing in 2000.

# OUT NOW!

*Modern Drummer* is spotlighting new recordings that have the drums at the center of their sound. These recordings might be drummer-led, or just include a high-quality, special, or a unique drumming and musical performance from the drummer and/or musicians in the band. Out Now is not restricted to only recordings, we will also be spotlighting new books and DVD's that are being released. We encourage our readers to listen to the recordings that inspire them and keep looking for new musical avenues to explore. You'll never know what new music you might find inspiring! Listen and learn.

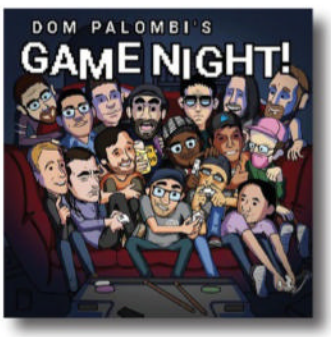
## Larry Goldings, Peter Bernstein, Bill Stewart

*Perpetual Pendulum*
Bill Stewart drums
Smoke Sessions

The trio of Larry Goldings, Peter Bernstein, and Bill Stewart is one of the longest standing working bands in jazz today. This band has been together for almost 30 years and has more recordings under their belt than you can count. On their recordings you can hear *their* history, and you can hear *the* history of organ trio jazz. Stewart's sense of swing, dynamics, and creativity is unending. This record includes standards, originals, and jazz standards like Wayne Shorter's "United," Gary Bartz' "Libra," and John Lewis' "Django." Their communication is telepathic, and their sense of exploration, groove, and joy is contagious. This trio and this record are both like a *Perpetual Pendulum,* it just keeps swinging!

## Dom Palombi

*Game Night*
Dom Palombi drums
Self-produced




For years, bands have looked to jazz and rock "standards" to perform with their bands. Beginning in the early 2000s, video game music started to get very serious, now it is becoming popular. Musicians are starting to look to "video game composers" for a new repertoire, and why not? If musicians can perform the themes from movies and TV shows, why not video games as well? Composers like Yasunori Mitsuda, Martin 'O Donnell, and Daisuke Ishiwatari are serious composers. Therefore, when drummer Dom Palombi sent us his new CD *Game Night*, consisting entirely of video game music, I was intrigued. Firstly, I am *NOT* a gamer! But this music is interesting, it is often very melodic, filled with melodic counterpoint, and very rhythmic. Palombi and his band do the music a real service by treating it with respect and making it an enjoyable addition to modern repertoire. The concept is cool, the playing and arranging is creative, and Dom's drumming is top notch. What more could you ask for?

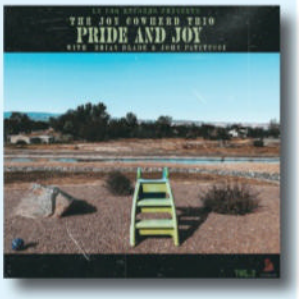
## Brian Eisenberg Jazz Orchestra

*Pain & Beauty*
Peter Erskine drums
Self-Produced

Composer-arranger Brian Eisenberg continues on his musical journey with a fantastic new big band recording. In the past Eisenberg has employed drummer Vinnie Colaiuta to frame his arrangements and compositions. This time around the "framer" is Peter Erskine, and the difference is an interesting study in approach. Eisenberg is using some more modern approaches and textures on this record. The rhythm section is (as always) strong and creative featuring guitarist Andrew Synowiec, pianist Christian Jacob,, bassist Trey Henry, Erskine, and vibraphonist Brad Dutz. The inclusion of the vibraphone is notable one because it adds and interesting voice to Eisenberg's musical palette with single lines and harmony. Synowiec is a guitarist that I'm sure we'll be hearing much more about. And Trey Henry and Erskine create a perfect foundation for these beautiful, dense, and adventurous charts. As always, Erskine turns up the heat where appropriate, simmers when needed, and cools when required. He is a master at work. Eisenberg spreads the solos around democratically and uses every sound and musical texture at his disposal. This is a GREAT record!

## Jon Cowherd Trio

*Pride & Joy*
Brian Blade drums
Alex Acuna percussion (3 tracks)
Le Coq Records




There are very few drum and bass combos that a leader can call that are on the level of John Pattitucci and Brian Blade. The telepathy, the sympathy, and just the overall agreement on where the music is going is a joy to hear, every time! Pianist Jon Cowherd and Blade also have a close and longtime relationship, and all of the trio's familiarity is on full display on *Pride & Joy.* The trio becomes a quintet on three tracks adding percussionist Alex Acuna and saxophonist Chris Potter (who both

shine on the title track.) *Pride & Joy* doesn't ever get too "out." It's a firmly grounded record. The musical camaraderie combined with the earthy feel of Cowherd's new home in Colorado and his old home of Kentucky. Cowherd paints a beautiful musical picture paying tribute to pianists Ellis Marsalis, Bill Evans, and Chick Corea.

## Sanah Kadoura

*Duality*
Sanah Kadoura drums
Self-Produced

Lebanese-Canadian drummer Sanah Kadoura is now in New York City and taking the city by storm. Her record *Duality* displays her strong composing and drumming skills. She has the sound and approach of a veteran. Her music lives in the modern place somewhere between adventuresome swing, globally influenced hip-hop, and well composed rock and pop. She is a new millennium musician to be sure. Her shuffle on "Interlude & Old Friends" is a welcome shot in the arm, "The Seer, The Soarer" and "Hidden Figures" all have a nice feel, and the Middle Eastern flavor of "Zaytcon" is a change. Saxophonist Stacy Dillard shines throughout.

## John Favicchia

*Tangible*
John Favicchia drums
Self-Produced

Longtime fusion drummer John Favicchia has put out a lot of recordings and drum instructional books. His new CD *Tangible* collects songs from his two bands Kukuc and Dharma as well as some Solo Drum Improvisations all in one place in a "tangible" form. Favicchia's drumming is slick and very well-articulated. His drumming approach is a wonderful mix of progressive rock and classic 80's fusion. His compositions are interesting suites of musical virtuosity and complexity. Faviccia is a talented drummer that we should hear more about and deserves more attention.

## David Whitman

*Oh, Hugo*
David Whitman drums
Self-Produced

Drummer David Whitman has delivered a beautiful sounding record. Whitman's wispy drums melt into his large group who is playing an entire set of Andrew Neesley compositions. The tunes and the arrangements create a nice landscape for the musicians. Members of the band include veteran's pianists Geoff Keezer and guitarist Bruce Forman.

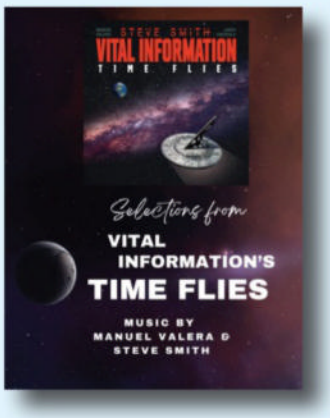
## Jorge Rossy

*Puerta*
Jeff Ballard drums
Jorge Rossy vibraphone and marimba
ECM

You don't hear many vibraphone trios. Jorge Rossy is a talented musician who broke on the jazz scene as the drummer in Brad Meldau's trio. That chair eventually became occupied by drummer Jeff Ballard. Now, Rossy and Ballard have united to create a unique record called *Puerta*. The recording is an amazing stereo document where you can hear Rossy's mallets moving across the stereo spectrum (left to right) as if you were sitting right in front of him. Ballard always creates unique and beautiful drum and percussion sounds, and to have them recorded by the people at ECM is a treat. The music is airy and explorative, and different in all the best ways. Fans of the music or the just the sound of vibes and marimba will love this contemplative record.

## Selections from Vital Information Time Flies

Manuel Valera and Steve Smith
Self-Published Book




There is a wonderful new trend in drumming and music. Drummers like Billy Cobham, Terri Lyne Carrington, and now Steve Smith are printing and releasing books of the compositions and arrangements of music that they have recorded (or are recording.) I hope more musicians follow suit. Smith's latest record *Time Flies* is an outstanding recording of a trio that has very few comparisons. The trio plays a new arrangement of Bud Powell's "Un Poco Loco," highly personalized arrangements of "Darn That Dream" and "What is This Thing…" as well as the powerful Tony Williams Lifetime influenced "Emergence." And thankfully, six of the compositions and arrangements from "Time Flies" are in this book for people to play. This is college level lead sheets (not drum transcriptions) for groups to play. (In fact) Valera who teaches jazz at NYU, is having his students learn and play these songs and arrangements. However, with the help of the recordings, any skilled musician with above average reading skills could play or (at least) read along with these tunes. Drummers can finally see the music that Smith is playing when we hear him on record or on stage, giving us a greater insight to why and what he plays.

# Joe Morello's Maple Ludwigs

This Ludwig five-piece sliver sparkle maple drum kit (14x22, 9x13, 16x16, 16x18, and 5.5x14 Hammered Bronze Snare) was owned and played by Joe Morello for many years. David Frangioni studied with Joe in the 80's and they became very close. David looked up to him as a mentor, educator, and a friend.

David, who was already a collector, had asked Joe if he had any stage played drum kits that he would consider parting with. Out of friendship, Joe offered to sell this kit to David. As David was a working musician and a teenager (i.e. broke) he asked his mom (Rita) if she would lend him the money to buy him the kit.

David treasured the kit for many years but regrettably sold it to make room during a move to in the mid- 2000s. Fast-forward to the 2018 Chicago Drum Show. Thinking that he would never be reunited with the drumkit, David saw the drum set for sale at one of the booths, and could not believe what he was seeing. Of course, David immediately purchased the kit. During the time that David did not own the kit, the heads were signed by some of the Ludwig family. The snare was signed by Joe Morello for David in person. This kit is featured at the Modern Drummer Museum Hall Of Fame in Florida.

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# SE FLYER PIT STOP

New for 2023, ddrum has added the Pitstop configuration to the SE Flyer line. This configuration is even more compact than the original, featuring a 15x16 Bass Drum, 7x10 Mounted Tom, 12x13 Floor Tom, and a 6x13 Snare Drum. The Pitstop shares all the features and improvements from the Bop configuration, including gull wing bass drum spurs, new snare throw-off, new double tom holder, included cymbal boom and floor tom memory locks. Like the Bop kit, the Pitstop comes with a Bass Drum lift to allow the bass drum beater to strike the smaller head in the proper place. ddrum, has also added the Vintage Sparkle finish to the SE Flyer line. This finish along with the black bass drum hoops with matching inlay give this kit a real look and feel of a vintage drumkit.

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